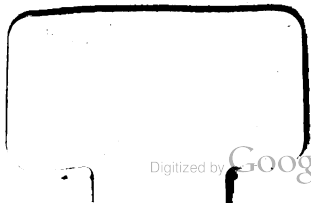

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“‘Valerie!’ the old doctor’s voice rang out sharp, stern, clear as a judgment call,
‘did you do this deadly, this devilish thing? Speak out, in God’s name!’”—page 336.

GRAPES OF THORNS

A NOVEL

BY

MARY T. WAGGAMAN



NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER I	
DUNVALLON	7
CHAPTER II	
A VIGIL	26
CHAPTER III	
THE TEMPTATION	45
CHAPTER IV	
BESIDE THE SEA	63
CHAPTER V	
DOCTOR PIERRE PEROT	80
CHAPTER VI	
MARJORIE	101
CHAPTER VII	
THE MARCHAND DOOM	118
CHAPTER VIII	
AT SAINT CECILE	137
CHAPTER IX	
A SUMMER FLIGHT	157

	PAGE
CHAPTER X	
ROTHESAY	175
CHAPTER XI	
LYNNHURST	192
CHAPTER XII	
YOUNG LOVE'S DREAM	211
CHAPTER XIII	
A NOVENA	232
CHAPTER XIV	
A HOMECOMING	248
CHAPTER XV	
IN THE DARKNESS	265
CHAPTER XVI	
A WAY OF THORNS	283
CHAPTER XVII	
STORM BEATEN	303
CHAPTER XVIII	
THE CONQUERING LIGHT	321

GRAPES OF THORNS

PART I

CHAPTER I

"DUNVALLON"

FOR a day and night the storm had lashed the coast—raging, lulling, raging again in a persistent fury that no outburst seemed to appease. The long, dreary stretch of beach had been swept by white-crested waves, thundering up to the range of sand-dunes before the wind that shouted hoarse command from black fastnesses of cloud.

But the "Barrens," as this reach of coast was called, had grown dully used to battle. For ages it had been a debatable land, claimed by warring forces of earth and sea. So fierce had been the havoc wrought in the struggle, so changing the breaks and barriers of the unceasing fray, that men had grown chary of approach. Neither the place itself nor the few hardy dwellers thereon, who still clung like grim crus-

taceans to its sands and shoals, were of good repute.

And yet, for a brief period of the year, the "Barrens" had a certain charm of their own. When the summer sun blazed down upon a fainting earth, and the fields were parched and the forests breathless, these wastes grew into a dream-world, cool and dim, in which the fever and fret of life had no place.

A world of mist—mist that, billowing up in white, silent triumph, seemed to veil the harsh severance of land and sea into phantasmal harmony, to blend their clamorous discord into protesting plaint.

It was this charm that had fallen upon Donald Carmichael and his young wife when, five months ago, they had turned from the gay lure of fashionable life to Dunvallon, the old manor house beyond the sand-dunes, where, while the autumn storm racked the shore, a fiercer battle had been raging between the ever-warring forces of life and death, for the cry of the new-born had risen feebly through the clamor of the tempest, and the young mother still lay in

peril as the storm lulled at last in the breaking day.

"She will pull through," said the old doctor, cheerily, as Donald Carmichael, white with the strain of a night of terror, followed him to the door. "Don't fear, man, with the babe to hearten her up, she will pull through. And with that grand lady, her mother, to look after her, too. Eh! but she has the sense and strength of three women in one, that same good Madam—what is the name?"

"My wife's mother—Madam Marchand, you mean?"

"Yes, yes," nodded the doctor; "a fine woman, Mr. Carmichael; a great woman, wise and strong. Never have I seen greater nerve or stronger mother-love. Your wife, she tells me, is her only child."

"Her only child," echoed Carmichael.

He was a slender, delicate man with the eyes and brow of a dreamer, who never had found need to waken into action or life. The fierce trial of the night had left him shaken and appalled.

"Aye, aye," said the doctor, nodding, "for

an only child, woman will brave all the perils of death and life—which sometimes are the worst, as we know—she will sorrow and suffer and sin. It is terrible in its strength, this mother's love. And it will save the little girl wife of yours, my friend. And now I must go, for old Barry has brought news of sore need on the beach. A boat was flung up on the reef and the men rescued a young woman lashed to it. She is in old Ann Devlin's cabin dying, they say, and I must go do what I can. I will be back as soon as possible. Meantime, take heart, man, take heart. The mother-love will hold the little wife—will hold her, I know. Let her hear her child's cry, feel the touch of its tiny hand, and all will be well."

And Doctor Wharton, a kindly old man, with a simple wisdom—learned chiefly in Nature's school—turned from the rich man's door to the sorer need that awaited him in the little cabin on the sands, for, in the bare stretch of his life path, neither fee nor fashion held place.

Carmichael paced the room for a few moments restlessly and then, pausing at the

low, broad window, drew back the silken curtains and looked out. The day was breaking, but as yet all was cloud and mist, the slender cedars that guarded the old manor house on the east were lost in billowy vapors, all lines and boundaries had vanished. Carmichael felt like one adrift in space—even the solid walls of Dunvallon seemed unreal and shadowy in the veiling mist.

How Vera had joyed in this dream-world. It had been one of her charming whims, this summer in the old manor by the sea. They had found it in one of their long automobile tours—dismantled and neglected, but young Mrs. Carmichael's capricious fancy had been seized by it at once. This "Castle in Cloudland" must be their own. And as since the wondrous night, more than two years ago, when Vera Marchand had dawned upon his enraptured sight at the Mardi Gras Ball, Donald had only lived to follow her sweet will—they broke away from the gay world in which she had moved, a dazzling vision of beauty and charm, and lost themselves in these mist-veiled wastes.

Flitting over the sands, rocking in her little skiff among the bays and shallows, venturing boldly out among the rocks and reefs, filling the sunlit spaces with the music of her laughter and song, the girl wife had seemed to the rude fisher-folks, who were her only neighbors, a creature beyond their ken. Never had anything so lovely and bewitching haunted this debatable land before. But it was a loveliness that awoke only wonder and a vague, formless fear. Strange stories about the lovely lady of Dunvallon were whispered by the old men over their pipes and mugs. One had seen her far out beyond Wrecker's Reef walking over the waves in the moonlight. Another had caught the wild notes of her "furrin" song at the gray dawning as he rounded Buzzard Island, fifteen miles from the shore. A third, struggling home through a fierce storm of thunder and lightning, had heard her silvery laugh as she flitted by him in the mists upturned by the wind.

"She do be a 'Nixie' and naught else," old Roger Bray declared grimly, "and she has the good man under her spell. But he

can not hold her, as ye see. She flits out in the storm and wind to meet her own."

And wild as were these stories, they had had some foundation in Vera's restless wanderings by sea and shore, in the mocking music of her laughter, the wild sweetness of her songs.

But laughter and song were silenced now—perhaps forever, thought Donald Carmichael, with a sickening pang of fear as he looked out into the mists and vapors ruling earth and sea and sky. Dreamer that he was, he had given little thought to the unseen. Art and science, beauty and love, all their shining ways had been open to him; he had sought neither height nor depth beyond their reach. But the anguish and dread of the past night had awakened him, shaken him from the soft security that had never known shock or fear. She who was the life of his life, unmoored from the strong fastenings of his love, was even now drifting—drifting whither? Through what strange, dim cloud-space, into what infinite distance was that bright, glad, winsome, elusive spirit taking its bewildered way?

Without church or creed, Carmichael had comfortably put aside the riddle of the infinite, the mystery of life and death, as beyond his solving; but now, *now*, with Vera still white and unconscious, Vera adrift in mists and shadows without beacon or guide, Vera facing that chartless unknown sea that laves every shore of life and love, the dreamer roused to agonizing question.

The old Faith of Christendom he knew had been his wife's birthright, but untaught, disregarded, it had held little place in her gay, glad life. They had indeed been married by a priest, a stranger alike to both of them, and Carmichael had willingly pledged himself to all that had been demanded.

Sometimes, as the solemn, authoritative demand of that old Mother Church recurred to him, he had wondered at the lightness with which Vera could set aside an influence so mighty and far reaching. He was conscious of a vague regret this morning—that she was not still within its fold. False or true, this old Church had been a beacon through the ages—a rock amid the storm.

If there were light anywhere in the darkness, truth in the noisy clamor of contesting creeds, hope beyond the blank and silence of death, it would be to that historic old Church he would turn for teaching.

And he would hold to his pledge. The child, if it lived, should be a Catholic.

The feeble wail of the babe from above inspired the thought. He had lost sight of the child in his anguished fear for the mother, and yet it was the child who would save her, the old doctor had said. The child who would rouse her to life and love, the child whose tiny hand could hold her back from the unknown sea to which she was drifting. Moved by a sudden anxiety about this potent newcomer, Carmichael roused from his dreams, and turned hastily from the window to face his mother-in-law, a stately, handsome woman of forty, who had just entered the room.

"They tell me the doctor has gone," she said sharply. "Gone! With Vera—the child—still in danger. Gone! Donald, how could you permit it? You must have been dreaming, indeed, to let him leave the house, to let him leave *your* wife for

some poor, beggarly creature on the beach."

"Who is dying," said Carmichael gravely; "or will die without his help."

"Let her die," was the pitiless answer; "what is it to us if a score of beggars die at a time like this? Send for him; he must come back—come back at any cost. The fool, the driveling old fool! To leave my child for some wretched castaway."

"Is Vera worse?" asked Carmichael breathlessly.

"No, no, but he should be here, he should be here. He had no right to leave us even for a moment. Go bring him back, Donald. Go yourself. Offer him any fee."

"I will," said Carmichael, who had never seen this proud, stately woman stirred into such passionate protest before. "He promised to return as soon as possible, but since you think it necessary he should come at once—" He paused, for to his masculine sense of justice the "beggar on the beach" had her claim.

But to Valerie Marchand just now there was neither justice nor mercy. There was only love, wild, passionate mother-love,

quivering with anguished fear for its own—undisciplined love mad with the terror of impending loss.

"At once! At once!" was the breathless answer. "At any cost, Donald; at any cost!" And, driven by this desperate appeal, Carmichael hurried out into the world of cloud and mist, in which even the solid old stone walls of Dunvallon vanished. Ere he was a dozen yards from its door a strange sense of unreality came over him as he pushed on through the white vapors billowing like a shadowy ocean around him. The tall cedars that sentineled the avenue, the stone pillars of the gateway, the stretch of sand-dunes beyond looming up dim and uncertain for a while, guided him. Then he was in the long, drear stretch of the Barrens and all track and path were lost. Only the thunder of the waves sinking back in sullen submission told him that he was nearing the sea. And, sheltered dreamer that he had been through his thirty years of pleasant life, Carmichael was again sharply conscious of his own helplessness in the face of the elemental even in Nature, of his

greater helplessness before the boundless mystery that lay beyond.

So alone and apart he seemed in this cloud-world through which he was making his bewildered way, that the sound of voices startled him strangely. He stumbled forward to find himself near a group of three or four men, who loomed up bulky and dim through the mist. They were gathered around an empty boat they had dragged up on the sands.

"Can ye make the name out, Rob?" one was asking.

"No," said another. "It was stove in when she struck the reef. But it's a good boat, as ye see, and cost some one a pretty penny."

"Aye, good enough, or it never would have done the work it did. Who was it seen her first?"

"Bart here," answered Robin. "Speak out for yourself and tell us, Bart. There's none here will gabble. Ye were out on the reef betimes we know."

"I was about me own bisness," was the gruff answer.

"Aye, go on, lad," said old Rob, with a chuckle. "Ye are young and bowld yet and can brave the storm and wind as I did meself twenty years ago. Ye mind that night we lit the blaze on Wrecker's Reef, when you and I were lads, Bill?"

"And had to ship on a Dutch East India-man to keep from swinging for it," answered Bill. "I don't want to hear of no such doings. We're sober, steady folks along the Barrens now. And if Bart found the boat, no one hez it agin him. Eh, what?" The speaker, suddenly aware of Carmichael's unseen approach, turned with a fierce oath, that was quickly merged into gruff respect as he recognized the master of Dunvallon.

"Beg your pardon, Mr. Carmichael, I didn't know ye. You are out early after the storm."

"Yes," answered the young gentleman, whose friendliness and generosity had made him very popular with his rude neighbors on the beach. "Perhaps you have heard—there is a little lassie up at Dunvallon."

"Aye, we have, sir," answered Rob.

"Good luck to her and to ye all. I hope she and her lady mother are doing well."

"Not so well as I could wish," Carmichael replied gravely. "I am anxious to have the doctor return at once. He is at Devlin's cottage."

"Aye, and with his hands full," said Rob, with a grim smile. "There's another little craft just made the life shore there."

"What, a child!" exclaimed Carmichael, startled. "You don't mean——"

"Yes, sir. The poor woman that was flung up on the reef—lashed in this boat here. Bart Benson happened by good luck to be on the point and dragged her in. Pretty bad off. Didn't know nothing or keer for nothing. But we got her alive to Ann Devlin's and sent for the doctor."

"And, and——?" Out of his own anxiety Carmichael's voice was quick and eager with sympathy.

"A child was born about an hour ago, sir; but the mother is dead."

"Merciful heaven!" exclaimed the young man. "What—who—was she? Could she tell?"

"Couldn't tell nothing, far as we hear," answered Rob. "But she were a lady sure. Rings on her fingers, silk coat wrapped around her. Boat here is some gentleman's gimcrack, as you kin see. It's only folk with more money than brains that 'ud go cavoorting 'round these 'ere shores a playing sailor in white-rigged yachts that nachally can't stand a storm. These 'ere Barrens ain't no place for fooling; the sea's got a cussed ugly temper from beating so long upon the rocks and reef, a cussed ugly temper as every one about here knows."

"Almost any sea would be dangerous in a storm like that of last night," said Carmichael, "and the boat seems as if it belonged to some pleasure craft, as you say. No doubt the brave fellows tried to save the woman at any cost to themselves. I must go on to Ann Devlin's and see if there is anything I can do."

And the speaker passed on through the lifting mist, now faintly threaded with the rose and gold of an unseen sunrise—all unconscious of the strange web of mingled

light and darkness he was about to cast in the loom of Fate.

"It does not matter to me," said Madam Marchand, as a few hours later she and her son-in-law held discussion with Doctor Wharton. "Of course, I can give no thought or care to any one but Vera. Still, if you wish that strange child brought here, Donald, at such an anxious time——"

"I can not say I wish it, *ma mère*." He had adopted Vera's name for her mother. "But you hear what the doctor says. It may stand a chance for its life here—or half a chance, perhaps. It stands none with that poor, driveling old Devlin woman on the beach."

"And is its life worth while?" asked the lady a little wearily. "A poor, half-dead, nameless waif. Still——" catching the grave surprise in the old doctor's face—"if you think it best."

"We do, madam," answered the old man bluntly. "The life that God gives is always worth while. And one never knows how rich and full and blessed that life may be.

This poor, frail little one has but a feeble chance, as you say. I had no hope of saving it until Mr. Carmichael suggested that if we brought the babe here in comfortable surroundings, with a skilful nurse to watch over it for a few days, that it might survive."

"And I could not think you would object, *ma mère*, my own heart was so full of sympathy, of—of—pity, of grateful relief for Vera's safety."

"Not yet," was the sharp answer, that seemed wrung from the mother's heart. "Oh, you do not know. You do not know. She is not safe yet. But—but," suddenly changing her tone, "I am weak and nervous and overwrought, as you see, Donald. Do as you think best, my dear boy, but don't expect anything of me. Tante Lise will do all that you ask her, I know."

And so it came to pass that when the sun went down that evening and the mists were shot with gold and crimson and purple, and all the evanescent splendor of an Oriental dream seemed to enwrap the old manor house behind the dunes, Tante Lise,

straight and wiry still in spite of her seventy odd years, was given double duty. Tante Lise, who had nursed Madam Marchand herself, peered curiously through half-shut eyes at the tiny form of the little waif of the storm and accepted her new charge, as she had accepted all the burdens and changes, pains, and sorrows of a long, hard life with the stoic philosophy of fatalism. For, despite her sixty years of civilization, Tante Lise was still a savage in heart and mind, a wise, wary, keen-eyed old savage whose one passion was a wild, absorbing devotion to Valerie Marchand, the beautiful nursling of forty years ago, whose fortunes she had followed with dumb, unquestioning fidelity through all the changes of Time and Fate.

"It will be double work and double pay," Carmichael said as he slipped a gold piece in Tante Lise's withered hand. "You will do all you can for the poor, motherless babe, I know. The doctor does not think it will live, but we will give it a chance—at least."

And the speaker turned away, his heart swelling with joy at his own blessings, with

pity for the darkness that made that joy more radiant by its magic gleam.

Far down in old Ann Devlin's cabin a fair young form lay stark and still in the gathering shadows, nameless and unmourned. And in her silken curtained, rose-lit chamber, Vera lay, smiling in mother gladness, with her babe upon her breast.

CHAPTER II

A VIGIL

TANTE LISE sat in the flickering fire-light keeping her double watch. Save for the ruddy glow about the hearth, the pale gleam of a shaded night-lamp, the wide, lofty room was in shadow. Dunvallon had been built full three-score years ago by an old ship master who, it was whispered, had come to his great wealth by dark and unhallowed ways. His memory and that of his black servant (who had worn rings in his ears and spoken in a strange language no Christian could understand) still lingered unpleasantly in the Barrens—where both master and man had finally been cast up by the sea after a sudden disappearance whose mystery was never solved. Distant heirs came into possession, but Dunvallon lay heavy upon their hands. It could not be sold, moved, rented, or even torn down with any profit.

Summer clubs, fishing parties, even one or two optimistic boarding-house keepers had ventured temporary occupancy, only to abandon it, until Vera Carmichael had flitted like a sunbeam into the old mansion and made it her own. At the touch of her golden wand the dim old rooms had wakened into life and light. Gay rugs, draperies, and silken cushions gave color to the shadowy vistas; pictures and tapestries brightened the dark walls, a mocking-bird sang in the oriel windows, where flowers, sheltered from the salt sea winds, bloomed without fear of frost or storm.

But the heavy old furniture of sixty years ago still remained—the great wardrobes and chests of drawers, too heavy for removal, the tall ghostly mirrors built into the walls and flanked by silver sconces, the tall four-post beds, holding grim memories of life and death.

And old Tante Lise, seated in the flickering firelight, seemed the fitting figure for the scene.

Tante Lise was a wonderful nurse. Her owner, a celebrated doctor, had trained and

taught her in the old slave days, when nurses were at a premium in the great plantations, and many a time in later years her training had told in emergencies that the white-capped graduate of a modern school would have found it hard to meet. She could neither read nor write; fever chart and fever thermometer were unknown and despised mysteries to her, but breath, pulse, glance, voice, told her all she asked to know—sometimes more than they told to science and skill. She had been through three yellow fever epidemics unscathed.

“Send us Tante Lise,” would be the cry from a stricken household in the olden days; “she is all the help we ask.”

And though Tante Lise was old now, and all things were changed, and even simple Doctor Wharton had seemed to regard her doubtfully, neither Vera nor her mother would have any other nurse. The bright, sunken eyes were very watchful to-night, the old ears keen; there was no dozing on guard, for the battle was not over, Tante Lise knew. She had learned death's tactics by many a grim fight, his feints and with-

drawals, only to make fiercer charge. And there were other perils lingering in these dim borderlands and battle-grounds—it was no time to sleep. So, with her keen old eyes fixed on the firelight, Tante Lise was keeping watch when the heavy silken curtains that veiled the doorway into the adjoining room were parted, and Madam Marchand slipped up to the old woman's side. She was a beautiful woman still, in spite of her forty years, and to-night in her trailing gown of some soft Oriental silk, her hair loosened into rich, draping waves, a feverish brightness on cheek and in eye, the years seemed to have lost their hold on her; she looked almost the lovely girl of a score of years ago, Tante Lise's joy and pride.

"Miss Val, why don' yo' go to bed and sleep? Why don' yo', honey chile? Your eyes is shinin' and your cheeks burnin', and yo'll be down sick yo'se'f. Why don' yo' go to bed and sleep, honey? Ain't ole Lise a-watchin'? Yo' kin trust ole Lise. Go to bed, Miss Val."

"Oh, I can't, I can't; I would only lie awake in a darkness filled with horrors,

Tante Lise." The speaker dropped on her knees beside the old woman. "Look at me, look at my eyes, listen to my voice. Am I all right, Tante Lise? Sometimes—sometimes I think the spells are creeping on me, too."

"Sho, sho, honey, don't talk foolishness. Yo'se all right, yo'se all right. Why, yo' eyes and yo' cheeks and yo' lips is pretty and bright as dey was twenty years ago, chile, jes' as bright and pretty. An' yo'se a Perot, yo' forgets, chile, yo'se ma own missy, Valerie Perot, dat I tuk when yo' was born. Dar ain't no cuss on yo'. Yo've jes been a steddysin' and worritin' and frettin', till yo' don't clarly know what yo' says. Jes' yo' go to bed now, and I'll bring you suthin' dat'll make yo' sleep, Miss Val."

"No, no," was the quick answer. "I—I don't want to sleep, Tante Lise. I would dream, dream terrible things, I know, dream that she was gone from me forever—forever. Tell me again, for I believe you more than any doctor in the world. Tell me—that—my child will live, will live."

"She's gwine to lib, honey," the old woman's voice had the gravity of an ancient Sibyl. "Yes, she's gwine to *lib*. Don't ask me no mo', honey; old Lise can't see no funder in de darkness; don't ask me no mo'."

"Oh! I won't, I won't, Tante Lise; it is all I ask now, all—all. To see her sleeping there safe, living happy with her babe in her arms. She won't give it up, Tante Lise; she won't let me take it from her. 'It is holding me to life, mama. I would die if she were not here—to hold me to life.' Oh, just so I felt, Tante Lise, twenty years ago."

"So yo' did, honey, so yo' did; but you couldn't help it, child. Women folks is jes' nachally dat foolish; dar's some wuss'n others, but dey's all pretty much alike. And Miss Vera"—again the old woman's voice took the grave, Sibylline note—"she got to go de way ob de res', honey. She got to go de way ob de res'."

"But, oh, it will be a happy way." Val-erie Marchand sank down on the faded cushion and lifted her feverish eyes eagerly to the old woman's face. "You know what

the doctor said years ago, Tante Lise, when the spells first came on, those dreadful spells that wrung my heart."

"De cuss, honey," said Tante Lise; "mout ez well gib it de right name—the 'Marchand cuss.' Dey kep' it dark, chile, dey kep' it dark; but I heern all about it when I went up wif you arter you was merried to de big house on the Bayou, dat old house dey say was built with men's blood and women's tears. Old Soleau Marchand was one ob de wust pirates dat ever sailed de Gulf, and he brought de cuss down on all ob his blood and name."

"Oh, hush, hush, Tante Lise; you must not say such dreadful things," cried Madam Marchand sharply. "It is cruel to say such things now, Tante Lise."

"Den I won't, honey; den I won't," was the low, soothing reply. "It is just spells, as de doctors say."

"And they can be cured, averted, as they told me five years ago, Tante Lise," continued Madam Marchand feverishly. "You know what the doctors told me at Saint Sylvester's, that I must keep her

happy, light-hearted, free from all care and pain and sorrow, from all knowledge of the shadow threatening her beautiful young life. And I have tried, Tante Lise; I have tried to do it with all my woman's strength."

"Yo' has, honey, yo' sholy has, Miss Val. De way yo' shet yo' mouf and turned yo' back in trouble, de way yo' steddied and planned and jostled fo' dat ar chile, de way you merried her off to such a grand, fine man."

"Oh, Tante Lise, no—no—I did not do that. He loved her as soon as he saw her, loved her with all his true, great heart. And she—she loved him. Oh, I could not stand between them; I could not bring out any grisly stories to forbid that love. I couldn't break my girl's heart. Tante Lise, after what the doctor at Saint Sylvester told me, I could not *dare*." And again Valerie Marchand raised her eyes to Tante Lise with that feverish, despairing appeal.

It was as if the strong, proud woman were driven to speech to-night, forced by some new-felt remorse to confession, to passionate

self-defense, that only this withered old Sibyl, seated in the firelight, must hear.

"No, honey, yo' couldn't, yo' couldn't; yo' wuz twixt de pit and de sea. Sho' yo' couldn't go fo' to tell Mr. Carmichael bout de Marchand cuss."

"Don't, don't call it that, Tante Lise," was again the sharp protest.

"What yo' call it, den, Miss Val?" asked the old woman, with grim stoicism. "What yo' call it, when all de Marchands hez been runnin' on wild and quar for mor'n a hundred years? What yo' call it when de ole Ginerol rode out in de middle ob de night to wake his dead sojers from dar graves and cussed 'em for not followin' him? What yo' call it when old Madame wouldn't open her mouf fo' ten years, but jes' stray 'round de big house like a lost spirit, a-pinchin' de servants black and blue wif dem long, sharp nails she wouldn't let no one cut? What yo' call it when Mademoiselle Celeste run off in her wedding dress and jumped in de Bayou and de old Judge hanged hisse'f wid his neckerchief in de magnolia tree, and de Cunnel—but Lord, Miss Val, what's

de use ob talkin'; yo' knows it all, chile, yo' knows dat trough. Mr. Jules lubbed yo' more dan his life. Ef I hadn't grabbed de knife out ob his hands tree diffrent times, he'd hev cut yo' throat."

"Oh, but he was ill then, my poor husband; it was delirium, Tante Lise. He died that same year, when Vera was only—only ten. But young as she was, she grieved for him, and missed him. It was then she first grew a little strange, Tante Lise, wandering off by herself and singing to the birds and flowers."

"Law me!" said Tante Lise. "She sholy kep' ma heart in ma mouf, a-strayin' off to de water's edge and slippin' off on any boat dat wuz nigh. She wuz gone down stream once all alone half de night. Dey allus take to de water, dey said up at de Bayou, de Marchands allus takes nachally to de water when dey gets quar. It's de old man's blood a-biling in 'em; he couldn't rest on dry land. Dat's what skeered me so dis summer de way Miss Vera tuk to dis hyah ol' rat-trap by de sea. It's a bad luck place I seen from de fust, but Miss Vera would

hab it, and dat husband can't say her no. She been actin' mouty quar hyah. She sholy been actin' mighty quar, de way she drag dat ar po' man out on de rocks and sands all hours ob de night. Lawd me, she couldn't rest indoors. Lawd," Tante suddenly started up as a feeble wail came from the great high-posted bed in the center of the room, "it's de t'other baby. I most furgot de chile was hyah."

The old woman rose and filled a bottle from the prepared milk she was keeping warm before the fire. "It's a great nuisance," said Madam Marchand petulantly; "I don't see why Donald bothered about the poor little wretch." But she followed Tante Lise to the bed, where, nestling amid downy coverings, clothed in some of the dainty garments prepared for the little Carmichael baby, lay the tiny waif of the storm. It was still crying feebly, but the sound awoke no thrill of tenderness or sympathy in the two women standing by the little stranger's bed.

"Will it live, do you think?" Madam Marchand asked indifferently, as Tante

Lise, with the instinct of the practised nurse, turned the fretting child on its pillow, and put the bottle to its lips.

"Dis chile—Lawd, yes—dis chile's got de life in it strong."

"I wonder what Donald expects to do with it," said the lady. "He certainly can not think of keeping it here. I shall insist upon sending it to some asylum at once."

"Mebbe somebody'll come and fotch it away," said Tante Lise. "Old Barney was tellin' some tale 'bout a big yacht dat he spied fur out in de sea de day ob de storm. An' only rich folks sails round in de yachts. He"—the old woman stopped sharply—"ain't dat Miss Vera callin'?"

"Yes, yes." Valerie Marchand's cold, proud face quickened into eager life, and she hurried back into the adjoining room, where the faint, roseate glow of a shaded lamp showed that feminine daintiness and luxury reigned supreme. Delicate draperies of lace and muslin ruled; the stiff, old-fashioned furniture, the great toilet table glittered with costly knick-knacks of crystal and silver. On the brass bed that

had supplanted the gloomy four-poster Vera Carmichael sat upright among her pillows, and there was that in her face and eyes that made her mother's heart leap with an awful dread.

"Vera, Vera, my child, my darling, what is it, Vera?"

"My baby," gasped the young mother. "Is it all right, mama, is it living? It doesn't cry; it doesn't cry."

"Because—because it is asleep, my dear; it is asleep." Madam Marchand took the child quickly into her own arms. "My darling, my darling, lie down; your baby is all right."

"Call Tante Lise. Call Tante Lise," panted Vera. "Let her see it. Oh, I have had such a dream, mama, such a dream. I thought it was dead, dead, dead, somewhere far out in the sea, and was calling to me, crying for its mother far out in the sea—alone. If it called me I would have to go, mama, I would have to go."

"My darling, hush, hush! Your baby is quite safe. Lie down and be quiet. Tante Lise, Tante Lise, come scold this naughty

girl; she has had a bad dream and is all a-tremble."

"Oh, my baby, Tante Lise, my baby; I thought it was gone."

"What sut of foolishness is dis?" asked Tante Lise gruffly. "What yo' gwine ter carry on like a baby yo'se'f? Lie right down dar in dem pillows, Miss Vera."

"It doesn't cry, it doesn't cry," said the young mother; "it was lying in my arms as if it had no life. It doesn't cry, Tante Lise."

"What yo' want de chile to cry fo'?" said Tante Lise, quite fiercely. "What yo' know 'bout baby's cryin', Miss Vera? Gimme dat ar chile, Miss Val, and yo' set down by dis hyah foolish girl and make her go to sleep." And Tante Lise lifted the babe from Madam Marchand's arms. As she did so the two women's eyes met significantly.

"There, Vera, darling, Tante Lise will take care of the baby while you go to sleep. I will sit here by you. I will not leave you again. You got nervous finding yourself alone; only nervous, dear."

"Oh, mama, no, it was worse, worse than nervous. It was the old, old fear,

mama; the old terror; the old call—away—away, I know not where.

“Mama, mama, if I lose my baby I am lost; I am lost. Even Donald can not hold me, mama. I will have to go out—out far where the sea is calling.”

“Vera, Vera”—there was piteous agony in Valerie Marchand’s cry—“don’t, don’t talk like this, dear, it—it breaks my heart. You must be quiet, Vera, or you will be very ill. You must be quiet.”

“Then bring the baby back to me again. Tell Tante Lise to let me have my baby.”

“No, no, not yet, dear, not yet; when you get quieter, Vera. It would disturb you now.”

“Oh, but I want her. I want her,” the wide open blue eyes were shining with strange fire. “I want to know that she is safe, that she is mine yet; I want to feel her breathe, to hear her cry. Oh, there, there!” the words broke off in a sob of relief, “she is crying; I hear her crying loud and strong. Don’t you hear her, mama?”

“Yes, dearest, yes, Tante Lise will take care of her; she is safe with Tante Lise.

Now try to keep quiet and go to sleep, Vera ; try to go to sleep for my sake."

"I will, I will, for your sake, mama, only open the door—open it wide, so I can hear my baby cry. Oh, it frightened me to have her so still ; oh, how loud she cries. That is a good sign, is it not, mama, a sign that she is well and strong?"

"Yes, dear, a sign that she is well and strong—if you would only go to sleep, Vera."

"I will, I will, in a minute ; I can't just yet. I am so—so happy. There she is crying again. Oh, why doesn't Tante Lise give her something ; maybe she is in pain, mama, maybe she is hungry, my poor little baby."

"No, no, dearest, she is neither in pain nor hungry, I am sure. There, there, I am going to smooth your hair as I used to when you were a little girl—smooth you to sleep, Vera."

"Mama, mama, my own dear mama." The speaker caught the smoothing hand to her lips. "Oh, I know now what your love is, what it has been all these years, for I

am a mama myself. Oh, mama, I know now what it is. It means more than life, more than death to me already. If I should lose my baby now, mama, I would go wild. I—I felt it coming just now, when I thought she was dead—the old, old feeling I had when papa died, that I must go, go somewhere out of myself, in the clouds, the mists. Oh, is she crying, mama, is she crying? There must be something wrong with her or she would not cry so long.”

“Dearest, only a moment ago, and you were glad to hear her cry.”

“I know, I know, and it is joy, still joy and pain and gladness and heartbreak and all things together. I can not bear to have her in pain, my little baby in pain. My own little baby, she went to sleep to-night with her wee hand clasped around my finger, such a tiny, crumpled rose-leaf of a hand. And how soft she felt lying in my arm, how soft and sweet and dear. And Donald—Donald will worship her, I know, his little girl. She will have everything, everything earth can give. Oh, it is good to be rich when one has a baby girl. You won’t mind

if I call her after Donald's mother, who died when he was a little boy. I feel so sorry for dead mothers, they miss so much. You won't mind if we call the baby Marjorie, mama?"

"No, dear, it is a beautiful name, but now—now you must be still. I have let you talk long enough; I won't listen to another word. Close your eyes and try to sleep, Vera."

"I will, I will. Put your hand on my head again, so I won't dream dreadful things again; that dear hand always kept bad dreams away. Oh, you have been so good to me always, my own, dear mama. Now I will go to sleep. I will go to sleep."

And the long fringed lashes drooped at last over the restless, questioning, beautiful eyes. Soothed by the mother touch, threading the rippling waves of her golden hair, Vera Carmichael slept. For full half an hour after the deep, regular breathing told of her patient's happy slumber, Valerie Marchand kept her silent watch, then rising noiselessly, she glided from the bedside,

and lifting the silken portiere, passed into the adjoining room.

The feeble, fretful wail of the little stranger came unnoticed from the shadowy depth of the tall four-poster, the fire had burned to a bed of glowing embers.

Tante Lise sat before it, silent, motionless, with the strange, solemn look of the old Cumæan Sybil on her wrinkled face, and Vera's child upon her lap still and stark—and dead.

CHAPTER III

THE TEMPTATION

TANTE LISE, Tante Lise," gasped Madam Marchand as she fell on her knees beside child and nurse. "Oh, not—not gone," she sobbed wildly; "it's not gone!"

"Gone, yes, honey, dead gone—gone when I tuk it from yo' arms, chile, gone when yo' tuk it from its mudder's breas'. I knowed it warn't goin' to lib, I knowed it from de fust, but I didn't luk for it a-goin' off quick as dis." And the sunken eyes were fixed solemnly on the tiny rigid form. "Christian folks would say, bress de Lawd; dey sholy would say, bress de Lawd."

"Vera, Vera," whispered the wretched mother hoarsely.

"Oh, Tante Lise, this will kill her, or worse."

"Sho, chile, sho," murmured the old woman; "she ain't a-knowin' it; she mustn't know it yet. It would put her back sholy.

Lawd, but it is a pooty little critter, jis de spit ob de Marchands, too, pooty and puny, wif de blue vein ober de nose dat means death sho'. I knowed it warn't going to lib from de fust. Heart didn't beat right—ole Marse doctor tole me how to count de baby's heart. Don't yo' t'ink Miss Vera's a-guessin', honey, and don't yo' t'ink she's *a-feelin'* something is wrong?"

"Yes, yes, and oh, she was wild, nearly wild, Tante Lise, then she thought she heard it crying, and—and——"

"'Twas de t'other one," said Tante Lise, nodding to the bed. "I warn't takin' no count ob her; she can cry loud enuff."

"My God! My God!" cried the unhappy mother despairingly; "what shall we do, oh, what *shall* we do? Oh, Tante Lise, you saw her eyes, you heard her voice a moment ago, you know what it meant."

"Yes, honey, I know, I know, it was de quar look, sho, de ole quar look. We can't tell her yet, Miss Val. 'Twould bring de cuss down sho'."

"Oh, it will, it will," the speaker wrung her hands in agony. "Oh, if you could have

heard her talking to me just now, Tante Lise! The mother-love in all its strength, its passion, has wakened in her breast. Oh, my darling, my poor darling, that I have guarded from every grief, every sorrow, to think this should fall upon her—this, this.”

“Ef yo’ was a Christian, Miss Val, chile, ef yo’ was a prayin’ Christian like yo’ own dead ma,” began the old woman.

“But I am not, I am not,” Valerie Marchand broke in fiercely. “I am only a mother, a wretched, despairing mother. How can one believe or hope or pray in face of things like this? There she is waking. She is calling for me now. What shall I say when she asks for her child, oh, what shall I say?”

“Fool her, honey, fool her,” answered Tante Lise excitedly; “lie to her if yo’ must, Miss Val, yo’ can’t tell her de troof jest yet.”

“Mama, mama,” came the tremulous call through the darkness; “where are you, mama?”

“Yes, dearest,” the speaker steadied her voice bravely as she returned to her daugh-

ter's side, "I only left you for a few minutes."

"Oh, the dream, mama, the dreadful dream came back. I thought my baby was gone again. But I hear her crying, I hear her crying. Oh, bring her to me, mama, I can not rest until I feel her in my arms again, in my heart."

"Dearest, no, let her stay with Tante Lise; she will disturb you, Vera. I will stay with you, right here at your side; try to go to sleep."

"Oh, I can not, I can not, not until I feel that I have her, that I am holding her close to me against all harm, that she is safe—safe. Oh, mama"—the cry rose into hysterical strength—"I must have her, I must, I *must*."

"What's all dis fuss hyar?" Tante Lise suddenly loomed up in the shadows. "What yo' cuttin' up all dis hyar foolishness 'bout, Miss Vera? I'se ashamed ob yo', I sholy is, a grown-up merried lady like yo' kerryin' on childish like dis. Dar's yo' baby ef yo' must hab her, dar she is to worrit and fret yo' all yo' want," and Tante Lise deposited

the soft little wailing bundle she held in Vera's arms. "Dar now, don't lemme heah no mo' ob dis hyah fuss."

"Tante Lise," the words came with a startled gasp from Vera's mother. "Tante Lise, oh, no—no—no."

"Hed to do it, Miss Val," grumbled the old woman; "jis nachally hed to gib dis foolish gal her way. She ain't nebba been crossed in her life, and it's no sut of time to begin crossin' her now. Tain't right, I know."

"Oh, yes it is, yes it is," murmured Vera rapturously as she pressed the babe close to her heart. "My baby, my baby, my own precious baby. Oh, how soft and sweet and warm she is now, not still and strange like she was an hour ago—hear her cry, mama, her dear little low cry. Oh, leave her with me, mama, don't take her away; she keeps all the fear and fright and tears from me—my baby, my own darling, living, breathing little baby that I dreamed was dead, that I dreamed was dead."

"Vera, Vera, my poor Vera," the mother's cry was one of anguished doubt.

"But it was only a dream, dear mama," went on the happy woman, "only a dream. Oh, mama, I would have gone mad if it had not been only a dream—if I had not wakened to find my baby again safe—safe. My darling, my precious darling, oh, mama, how softly she breathes, how warm and strong she is; oh, let her stay here with me; don't take her away, please."

Then it was that seeing the ashen despair in her own nursling's face, Tante Lise rose in all the might of her authority.

"Yo' shet up dem eyes and dat mouf dis minnit den, Miss Vera, or I won't leave dat chile wif yo' anudder minnit. Shet up dem eyes and dat mouf and go right to sleep. Nebba had sich doin's since I'se been a nuss. I'll hab dat ole doctor puttin' his glass pipe in yo' mouf to-morrow mornin' and tellin' me yo' temper is risin'. Is yo' gwine to sleep, Miss Vera?"

"Oh, yes, yes," and the soft, low laugh bubbled in all its old girlish gladness from the young mother's lips. "You dear old crosspatch, just leave my baby here and I'll shut my eyes and not speak another word."

We'll go to sleep together, baby mine, happy, happy sleep."

"Tante Lise, Tante Lise, what have you done?" cried Valerie Marchand as half an hour later she turned from the happy sleepers to the room where Tante Lise was stretching a tiny form in its last rigid rest. "Oh, what have you done, Tante Lise?"

"Saved dat ar chile's life fo' yo', Miss Val," was the answer. "I hed to keep her quiet to-night. To-morrow—dar's times when yo' can't stop to t'ink of to-morrow, honey; dar's times when yo' can't stop to t'ink. What yo' reckon would happen if she could see what's a-lyin' here?"

"Heavens!" the woman cast a shuddering glance at the cold, stiff, waxen little form. "I—I dare not think. Does Donald, does Mr. Carmichael know?"

The old woman shook her head. "He'll know soon enuff, chile. No use in raisin' perturbation in de dead ob de night, Miss Vera might hear. We'se got to keep her quiet, Miss Val. I don't like de look in her eyes to-night; got ter keep her quiet. But

I'se on de watch, honey, yo' needn't fret. Lie down on dat sofy and git some rest; you'se got rings around dem eyes of yours ez black as ma face. Git some rest, Miss Val, while yo' kin."

And obedient to the old voice, that had soothed her pains and sorrows for forty years, Valerie Marchand sank down on the cushioned couch and closed her eyes, even though it seemed impossible to shut out torturing visions from her throbbing brain. She was conscious of Tante Lise moving deftly and noiselessly around the darkened room, straightening the tiny form in the big four-poster, covering it with a linen sheet; she heard the faint cry of the strange child in Vera's arms, knew that the old woman was stealing in softly to watch and guard, then slowly but steadily perception grew vaguer, dimmer, duller, even the sharp throes of suspense lost their piercing sting—a merciful oblivion engulfed her—and at last, exhausted by pain and sorrow, Valerie Marchand slept.

A shaking hand on her shoulder aroused

her. She started up nervously from troubled dreams to find the windows gray with the chill morning mists, and Tante Lise bending over her, tremulous and eager.

"Wake up, Miss Val, wake up, quick, hurry. No, dar's nuffin wrong wif Miss Vera; she sleepin' like a lamb, chile, but we'se got to t'ink now, we'se got to stir quick. Dar's folks downstairs talkin' to Mr. Carmichael; dey's come to luk fo' dat woman and her baby. Miss Val, we'se got to t'ink, we'se got to talk quick."

"To look—for the woman—and her baby," Valerie Marchand repeated uncomprehendingly.

"Yes, honey, de baby, de baby, dat's lyin' in yonder in Miss Vera's arms, de baby dat I gib her fo' her own, de baby dat she's been a coddlin' and a cooin' over like de nestin' bird half de night. Dey'se come for dat baby I gib Miss Vera fo' her own, and I dassent take it from her. Fo' de Lawd's sake, wake up wide, Miss Val, and tell me quick what we'se to do." It was the first time in all these forty years together that Tante Lise's lips had voiced the cry of the

weaker to the stronger race, and Valerie Marchand roused wide awake indeed to its strange appeal.

She started to her feet, a sudden, vivid flashlight of memory photographing the whole scene in her brain forever. In the long after years she could close her eyes and see every detail—the lofty, shadowy room, the silvery mists without, the wide window, the tall four-post bed with its tiny sheeted occupant, the old woman bending over her, shaking with fear and doubt.

“Dey’s come fo’ de chile,” repeated Tante Lise. “I peered over de banister and heern and seen ’em. Dey’s all great, grand folks, dat’s boun’ to have dere way. Dey’s come to take de dead mudder and de libbin’ chile; de chile dat’s lyin’ in Miss Vera’s arms now and dat she’s a cuddlin’ and cooin’ over fo’ her own. It’s gwine to kill her ter give it up, Miss Val, ter kill or to set her quar.”

“It will, it will; they can not take it from her yet; they shall not,” said Madam Marchand resolutely. “They must leave the child here—until—until Vera is better—until it is safe to tell her that—that—”

Then as her eyes sought the little sheeted figure on the bed, the resolute voice broke.

Ah, none knew better than she how every touch of the tiny hand on Vera's breast was welding closer the false, fictitious tie, how every heart-beat was stirring into fuller, deeper current the rising tide of mother love, how every happy moment of borrowed, nay stolen, joy would sharpen the coming pang of loss. Better now—better now the sharp, quick wrench of the clinging tendrils—than to have them grown into greater strength with every blissful hour of hope and love, better now than later. Better now?

And then, as if in answer to the torturing question, Valérie Marchand seemed to see the wild light in her daughter's eye, to hear the sharp anguish in her voice, to feel again the icy chill of dread that had frozen her own mother's heart a few hours ago.

"It's gwine to kill Miss Vera to take dat chile from her now," muttered Tante Lise; "to kill her or set her quar, Miss Val, honey. I'se been a steddin' 'bout it, steddin' all de night troo, Miss Val; *yo' jes' got to keep*

dat ar' libbin' baby fur Miss Vera's own."

"Tante Lise"—for one moment Valerie Marchand recoiled, startled from the old Sibyl's whisper—then all that it signified flashed upon her—past, present, future seemed to start out illumined by blinding light. She glanced at the tiny, sheeted figure in the bed and shuddered. "We can't, Tante Lise, we can't."

"We kin, honey, yo' and me kin. We kin gib dem folks downstairs dis hyah dead baby and dey'll nebba know. Nobody will nebba know but yo' and me, Miss Val, not Mr. Donald or Miss Vera or nobody. Who's gwine to tell which chile died in de night?"

Who indeed? Who indeed? For the days had passed when Valerie Marchand looked to the all-seeing witness—the God of Justice and Truth.

"Tante Lise, Tante Lise—oh, it would save her indeed—it would save my darling child, and—and"—every heartstring was quivering in the grip of fierce temptation—"as you say, Tante Lise, she need never

know—she need never know. Oh, Tante Lise—if I dared—if I dared.”

“Yo’s e got to dare, honey, yo’s e got to dare, quick. I dassent do nothin’ till yo’ say so, Miss Val, but gib de word, honey, and I’ll lie fo’ yo’, lie to Mr. Donald and to dem all.”

“Oh, not to Donald, not to him,” was the shaking whisper.

“Him too, honey, him too,” said Tante Lise resolutely. “Yo’ t’ink a fust-class gemmen gwine to hold onto a baby what ain’t his own? Yo’ t’ink Marse Carmichael gwine to stand for a *lie*? No, chile, no, not if ’twas gwine to save dat gal he lubs better dan his life. . . . Men folks ain’t got soft, foolish hearts like wimmen. We’s e got to lie to him, too. Jes’ say de word, and I’ll do it, Miss Val. Yo’ jes say de word, and den go sit by Miss Vera’s bed and don’t worry; tain’t fer yo’ to blacken dat ar putty white lady’s lips and tongue ob yourn wif ugly t’ings like lies. Say de word, Miss Val, and I’ll tell dem folks downstairs de chile dey’s axin’ fo’ died in de night.”

And Valerie Marchand’s face hardened

into tense rigid lines as she whispered, "Go tell them that, Tante Lise, the child they are asking for died in the night." She turned into the other room as she spoke, the room where the light of the rose-tinted lamp fell upon the fair face of the young mother, smiling in happy sleep, the strange babe nestling in her arms, its little rose-leaf hand clasping her fingers.

And with the new lines in her face hardening into sterner strength, Madam Marchand turned resolutely into the thorny path of falsehood. She must tread on guilty fear forever. She had "given the word." The child of the other woman had died in the night.

Tante Lise crept cautiously down the wide shadowy stairs. The thick walls and stout timbers of Dunvallon had excluded from the upper rooms all sound of the unusual stir, the strange voices below.

Two, three, four carriages had come speeding out in the gray of the dawning and the misty stretch of the Barrens was alive with question, with sympathy, with condolence. A cordon of watchers kept

guard around Ann Devlin's cabin and prevented all approach—newspaper men made their course along the beach to inspect the broken boat and ply Robin and Bart and Jim with eager queries—while in the great living-room of Dunvallon Carmichael heard the brief, broken story of the white-faced, stern-lipped man, on whose glad, vigorous youth there seemed to have fallen a sudden blight of age.

“I am an Englishman,” he said tersely, almost harshly, in a reserve that his listener understood. “My name—Arthur Eveleth. I was over here visiting friends, relatives of my wife on the Long Island coast. She was very fond of the water and we had spent a great deal of time on her cousin's yacht.

“It was only a plaything at best,” he said, with a muttered oath, “and when we were caught in the storm, driven on the rocks, it went to pieces like an eggshell. I had lashed her in the boat for safety before we struck, thinking to spring in after her, but when the yacht careened we were swept apart. I caught hold of a broken spar, and

was saved, I scarcely knew how. Two of the crew picked me up in the darkness and they had clung to the wreck, which kept afloat against all chances until day. Then the Life Savers came out to us, but could tell me nothing. Everywhere the wires were down along the coast."

"Unfortunately they were," said Carmichael, his tone full of grave sympathy. "I telegraphed to the newspapers as soon as possible, but it was half a day before they could re-establish connection. I only wish that I could have done more."

"You could not have done more," was the stern, stoical answer. "No one could have done more, Mr. Carmichael. It is one of those cases where man, mighty and powerful as he believes himself, is the plaything of grim, pitiless Fate. The cruel mockery of it is my own escape. But a man can always fix that for himself. A bullet or a pellet quickly ends all."

"Do not say that," said Carmichael gently. "You forget—the child."

"The child, her child," the stern, set lips of the speaker quivered for a moment. "I

had forgotten the child. A—a little girl, you say, Elinor's little girl." The stern voice broke for a moment into a hoarse, deep sob, the strong man bowed his head in his clasped hands and his whole form shook convulsively.

"Give way, my friend, give way," Carmichael's kind voice was tremulous with sympathy; "don't try to stand like a rock under a blow like this. Aye, it's a little girl, man, a little girl that will have her mother's eyes and her mother's smile for you, a little girl that will creep like an ivy vine about your heart and bind up all its bitter break, a little girl that will need double care and love for her sore loss. You will have to live for her sake—man—for your motherless child's sake."

Out of the depths of his own heart, stirred by new emotions, Carmichael spoke and his words seemed to reach some hidden fount of tenderness, for his listener bent his head lower in his hands and the tears of the strong, silent man burst forth in a saving flood. Carmichael turned away to the window where the pale, silvery mists were

shimmering into opaline tints of rose and gold at the touch of the dawn. It was the eternal mystery of light and darkness, joy and sorrow, life and death, whose meaning and inter-meaning was beyond mortal power or plan.

But surely, the Great Design was all—justice—mercy—love.

Even to woe like that beside him now there might come compensation, the touch of baby fingers might heal and save and guide.

And as the kindly dreamer's heart swelled in sympathy to this hope, there came a trembling knock at the door.

Carmichael opened it hurriedly to prevent intrusion on his guest. Old Tante Lise stood on the shadowy threshold.

"Brought bad-luck news, Marse Donald," she said in a shaking voice—

"Of Vera? Her child?" asked Carmichael, his face paling.

"No, sir, no—" the old voice steadied bravely. "'Tain't 'bout dem. It's de t'other chile—dat dead woman's baby. It was mighty weakly, as yo' know. It's dead, sah; de po' little critter died in de night."

CHAPTER IV

BESIDE THE SEA

THE mist-veiled reaches of the Barrens were athrill with interest this morning. Never since the fateful day, more than twenty years ago, when the great merchantman, the *Corsair*, had gone to pieces on Wrecker's Reef, had excitement run so high on this desolate shore. Even old Roger Bray, whom age and rheumatism had nearly fossilized, wakened into returning life and stumped out of his little cabin, to gossip with the rest. Heavy-witted Bart had suddenly risen into unwonted importance.

"They'll be giving you something pretty, lad, for dragging the leddy ashore," said old Roger. "They've paid old Ann Devlin twenty dollars down already to leave her cabin to the gentlefolks, that have taken the poor corpse in charge. Aye, aye, but it was hard luck to come to the rich

and grand. It's an English lord the gentleman is—they say."

"Who says so?" asked Bart gruffly; "he didn't say nothing about lord to me."

"Real fust-class folks don't talk about such things," put in big Rob, "but the newspaper men said something 'bout his being a lord or earl—or whatever they call great folks in the old country."

"I don't believe no sech talk," said Bart. "He's as plain and 'spectable a man as ever I see. Here's a boy that come down with his folks," and Bart turned toward a slender lad of nine years, who had drawn near to inspect the broken boat, which was a center of interest to all. "Is that ar gent of yours any earl or lord, sonny?"

"My cousin Arthur, you mean?" The boy looked up at the questioner with frank, friendly eyes. "No, he's not a lord yet, but he will be some day, when his uncle dies. He is only Mr. Eveleth now, who married my cousin Elinor. Is this the boat that brought her ashore? Did one of you men drag her in?"

"Aye, I did," answered Bart.

"It was very good of you," said the boy. "Cousin Arthur will always remember it, I know. Gee, it's awful sad to think she is dead. Mama nearly fainted when she heard it. Then she made me come with her because she couldn't come alone at night. Papa is dead and I am her only boy."

"And you're an Englisher, too?" asked old Roger curiously.

"No, siree," was the emphatic answer. "I'm plain Jack Randolph Mason, and my grandfather and great-grandfather and everybody else, straight up and down the line, were Americans through and through."

"Good," laughed old Roger with a palsied nod, and even Bart and the rest were conscious of a stir in their sluggish souls at this boyish outburst. And Master Jack Mason, who, despite the sad occasion of his visit, was of an age to be easily and happily distracted from mournful thoughts, soon established friendly relations with his new acquaintances, whose rude exterior and speech seemed to have a novel charm for

him. "You're just like the men in story books," he said to Bart, who felt it behooved him to keep an eye on this young gentleman, who was disposed to investigate rock and reef and sand-dune with natural boyish interest. "I live on the seashore myself, but Beachcombe is not like this at all. It's smooth and straight and we have lawns and trees and boathouses, and a beach where the waves come rippling up and you couldn't get drowned if you tried."

"So much the better for chaps like you," said Bart grimly, as he steadied Master Jack's reckless steps over the half-submerged reef. "Look out—there are suck-holes about here that will swallow you up before you can holler twice."

"Quicksands, you mean?" asked Master Jack eagerly.

"Wal, they ain't slow—sure," answered Bart with a heavy attempt at a joke.

"Did you ever know them to swallow any one?" asked his young companion with interest.

"I've heard of it," said Bart evasively. "I've heard of lots of folks that came fool-

ing 'round here in the fogs and nobody ever seen 'em again. I say it's the suckholes, but old Roger, that crooked old man with the white whiskers, he says it's Nixies that puts spells on 'em, and calls 'em out to sea."

"And—and—what are Nixies?" asked Master Jack, wide-eyed and breathless now.

"Sperrits," answered Bart briefly; "wal, not to say exactly sperrits, but sort of water witches. Old Roger says they always gather in cloudy stretches like this, that ain't neither sea nor land. And once they put a spell on you, you can't break loose."

"Did old Roger ever see one?" asked Jack doubtfully.

"Dunno," answered Bart. "He says sometimes they flit around like women-folks an' you can't tell. But they kin spell-bind you all the same."

"Gee, I'd like to meet one," said Master Jack enthusiastically. "I'd like to stay here a whole month and see things. It's so wild and dangerous. I never was in a real wild, dangerous place before. Where does that

point go? It is all lost in the mist. Can't we go out and see?"

And they went out, for rough Bart had taken a strong fancy to this bright, manly little chap, and was ready to guide him where he willed. Altogether it was a wonderful day to Master Jack, who had been guarded as mothers guard their one darling from all contact with the rude, dark, perilous side of life.

But "mama" was in old Ann Devlin's cabin, mourning and ministering with womanly tenderness to all that was earthly of the beautiful cousin she had loved, and Master Jack was left to wander over rock and reef and sand-dunes with rough, black-browed Bart as his mentor and guide.

A wonderful day, indeed, a day that fixed itself in the boy's memory forever, a day that came back to him in the after years like a strange, beautiful morning dream—of shifting mists and steep paths leading over cloud-veiled heights, and wave-washed ways jutting out through lifting fogs into the sea. And as they went Bart told brief stories of storm and shipwrecks, and

struggles against death and danger that to him were the simple commonplaces of life, but to his young listener narrations more thrilling than any printed page could give.

"Gee! but this is an exciting place to live. I wish we had fogs and reefs and dangerous things at Beachcombe, but mama would not like them, I am sure. I don't suppose any ladies live here."

"There's one," said Bart. They had climbed the last ridge of sand-dunes now, and the cedars of Dunvallon showed through the breaking mists. "She lives down yon——"

"There!" exclaimed the boy, peering curiously down, as walls and gables and turreted chimneys seemed to take form and shape in the shifting vapors. "Why—why—it's a real big, grand house."

"Big and grand enough," replied Bart, nodding, "but a bad luck place for all that. What she took to it for nobody knows, for they have money in plenty to go where they will. Old Roger has it"—Bart gave a short laugh—"that she is the Nixie sort that wants

the mist and the sea. And she do have queer ways sure, a-flitting over the reefs and sands and singing—aye, but she can sing like a bird to the stars. But I hear there is a baby there now, and that will steady her, I'm thinking—there'll be no flitting or singing now. She'll have suthing to keep her at home."

For a moment they stood watching as the mists broke and met, and broke again shimmering into silvery argosies, that drifted seaward—laden with visions of the night—that bore no witness to the boy they were to shadow in the after years. He only saw the old stone walls of Dunvallon rising dim and gray beyond their guarding cedars.

"It looks like the cloud castle in a fairy book," he laughed, "where the Princess is bound by a wicked witch spell, and has to sleep for a hundred years. But I've done with fairy books; I like battles and shipwrecks and real men stories now. And I am going off to college next year, at Saint Bede's. They've got a football team in the Prep and I'll make things hum."

And Master Jack wandered on through

the shining mists with his guide and ate clams and picked up pocketfuls of queer shells on the beach and lingered curiously around the half-buried wreck of the old Spanish galleon, whose history not even old Roger Bray could tell, for it had foundered here in some far past, when the shore was a shoal. It was a lonely spot, where the old galleon lay, its rotten hulk, overgrown with barnacles, rising black and grim in the changing mists.

The sand-dunes that sheltered Dunvallon sloped down here in shifting sweeps, over which the winds and waves battled fiercely when the storm lashed the coast. But the wind was victor, year by year, the uplifted barrens were strengthening this debatable land stretching in perilous reefs and shallows, into the sullen, baffled sea. On one of these reefs, jutting far out into the frothing waves, Bart's trained eye discerned a figure.

"Thar's that Englisher," he said to Jack, "your cousin. That ain't no safe place to stop long. The tide's a-coming in fast. You'd better call to him to come back."

"Hallo there! Hallo, Cousin Arthur! Cousin Arthur!" shouted Jack lustily.

There was no answer. That motionless figure in the mist was lost to sight, to sound, to all things but the agony of despair that benumbed every faculty.

When Donald Carmichael's kind, half-broken whisper had told him his child was dead, the saving font of tears in Arthur Eveleth's eyes had suddenly chilled his heart and soul, had hardened into ice. His momentary weakness was mastered. Cool, composed, courteous, he thanked Mr. Carmichael for his kindness, gave some necessary directions about the disposal of the dead child and bidding his sympathetic host adieu—a hurried adieu—he strode away—how—where—he did not know. In the agony of despair, that he was so rigidly masking, there was but one vivid leading thought—escape. Escape from every eye and voice and presence, from every maddening memory of the past, every thought of the future, from all that had been or must be. Escape—escape. And, with the same instinct that sends the wild creatures



“That motionless figure in the mist was lost to sight, to sound, to all things but the agony of despair.”—*page 72.*

of the forest and jungle to hide their death-wounds in thicket and swamp, Eveleth strode away down the ridges and slopes of the sand-dunes into the cloud land that bordered the sea. The mist, sun-threaded now as if spun of fire and dew, closed around him in friendly shelter, the sand stretched into desolate, restful space, there was no sound but the dull surge of the waves, beating in hopeless plaint on the shore. Out to the uttermost edge of this debatable land Eveleth strode, and stood there, dull, mute, stricken into blind disbelief—despair. She had believed, hoped, prayed, and no ear had heard, no hand had been outstretched to save her, she had drifted out alone, into a darkness, where there was no light, no hope. And she had left him to live on in a darkness deeper still. How could he bear the interminable stretch of long, death-hushed, death-chilled years before him? Why should he bear it? If the child had lived—as Carmichael had said, if the child had lived to look upon him with her eyes, her smile, to need his double care.

If the child had lived—but now, now there was nothing, no tie to hold him to a life that had suddenly grown bare and desolate as this reef that, washed by restless, baffled waves, stretched out through cloud and mist, a mere chance of shifting sands into the boundless sea. What worth was it to him, to any one, this barren, storm-swept foothold without bloom or beauty or sun? A step or two forward—a swift plunge into those surging, moaning depths, and there would be an end of all—rest, peace, oblivion, merciful nothingness forever. And in the blind madness of an unbeliever's despair Eveleth might have yielded in another moment to the tempter's whisper but for the saving touch upon his arm, as Master Jack, breathless with his race over the sands, stood beside him. "Cousin Arthur, I have been calling and calling, and you wouldn't hear."

"Jackanapes!" exclaimed Eveleth, startled. It had been his and her pet name for the boy who had been chum and host and gallant young henchman to his English cousins all summer through.

"I've been just shouting to you," went on Jack. "You're not—not ill, Cousin Arthur?" the speaker looked up anxiously into the stern, rigid face as he slipped his hand on his cousin's arm.

"No, not ill, Jack."

"I thought maybe you were—you've had such awful trouble. Gee! I'm sorry for you," continued Jack, plunging in recklessly where neither men nor angels would dare just now to tread, "I just can't tell you how sorry I am, Cousin Arthur."

"Don't try, Jack," was the low, brief warning.

"I won't, I can't. I'd just break down myself—like—like—a baby girl." And the young voice shook and the boyish lips quivered. "Golly, but you're great, Cousin Arthur," and Jack's eyes were lifted admiringly to the white, stern face. Some life pulse stirred in Eveleth's breast at the words that came straight from the boyish heart he knew.

"A real, great, grand and strong man," exclaimed Master Jack. "I mean to grow up just like you—if I can——"

"No, don't, Jack," was the low, hoarse answer, "not like me, boy—not like me."

"Just like you," repeated Jack firmly. "I want to stand up to things brave and still like you're doing, and not squeal or shirk. That's what your seal means, doesn't it?" and Jack touched the signet ring on Eveleth's finger. "Cousin Elinor used to let me seal her letters sometimes and told me about the motto, '*Non nobis solum*,' and how it had been on banners and shields and things for nearly a thousand years, and the Eveleths had lost their money and lands and heads, sometimes, living up to it. She was awfully proud of that seal," said Jack, unconscious of the heart chords he was tugging into anguished life again.

Aye, she had been proud of it, indeed, with a sweet, lofty pride that had no touch of petty snobbish vanity.

"*Non nobis solum*." The old words ringing down the ages should be the motto of their love, of their lives, she had whispered to him with rapt uplifted eyes in their first blissful moment of mutual understanding.

"Non nobis solum"—how the memory of voice and glance rent and tore every fiber of Eveleth's heart. But the pang was life again, pulsing, bleeding, tortured life. He felt, he heard once more—*"Non nobis solum."*

"Not for ourselves alone," swelled a chorus of voices from the heroic past. It had been the stern cry of the old Baron at Runnymede, when he helped to force the great charter from a tyrant king, it had risen from court and council chamber, echoed from battlefield and prison and block wherever there had been need of head to plan or hand to strike or life to risk and lose for justice and right.

"Non nobis solum"—and to Arthur Eveleth's quickened ear the surge of the rising tide seemed to thunder the words with new and solemn meaning.

"Non nobis solum," not for themselves alone had the Eveleths lived, and worked, battled, suffered, in the thousand years of their history, not for themselves in coward weakness had they died. The sequence came—stern, clear, as of the voices of the

past—nay, sweeter still, her voice spoke in solemn command.

Not for himself alone must he, the scion of that noble race, live or die now.

"The tide is rising pretty fast," said Master Jack, uneasily surveying the incoming waves. "Bart says it always rises fast and high after a storm. This reef isn't safe in a rising tide, Cousin Arthur——"

"No, it isn't," answered Eveleth slowly. "And if you had not come out the tide would have caught me, Jack. I couldn't stand against it——"

"Oh, you might," said Jack. "I couldn't, but I'm not a big, strong man like you. You could beat the tide back to solid ground, I know, every time."

"I'm not so sure of that, Jack," said Eveleth. "There are tides no man can stand against, my boy. I am glad you called me, Jack, in time. We will go back." And they went back together, Eveleth's hand on the boy's shoulder, the white-foamed waves leaping hungrily behind them as the tide swept up over the sandy foothold, that had been so nearly lost.

A little later Jack stood in Ann Devlin's

cabin, and looked his last through boyish tears at Cousin Elinor lying pale and lovely in her flower-wreathed casket, for even to these far-off wastes tender friends had found means to bring bud and blossoms. She was to be placed in a vault in the neighboring city, and taken back to Eveleth-Tomes for burial after the age-long custom of her husband's family that had ever cherished sacredly the dust of their noble line.

White and sweet and calm she lay, her still arms clasping a tiny form that seemed to nestle on her still breast as if glad to be borne away on that safe shelter from a world of sorrow and sin.

And while Arthur Eveleth stood white and stern and resolute beside his dead, Donald Carmichael was bending in glad, grateful tenderness over his treasures—the mother and child—growing into happy life and strength every hour.

“We will have the good Father from Rockport come to baptize her as I promised, and we will call her, since you are so sweet as to wish it, darling, after my own dear mother, Marjorie Eliot Carmichael.”

CHAPTER V

DOCTOR PIERRE PEROT

VALERIE MARCHAND stood on the wide porch of Dunvallon looking to the west. On the seaward side the mist was rising to meet the twilight, but here the unseen sun sent a tremulous radiance through the cedars; the cloud veil was rent with shafts of golden light even as the glory of the vision beyond sometimes reaches the uplifted eye of Faith. But there was no lesson in the scene to the pale, haughty woman who leaned on the stone balustrade looking into the sunset light struggling through the clouds and vapors. Faith and Hope alike had long ceased to teach her either by word or sign. Only Love ruled, a fierce, passionate, desperate Love, blind to all things in heaven and on earth, but the needs, the claims, the happiness of its own, the wild, idolatrous love of a mother who would die for her child without hesitation, and sin

for her without remorse. It was not remorse that shadowed Valerie Marchand's face now—her long-dulled conscience felt no awakening pang at the thought of the lie, the theft, the cruel wrong she had wrought to save her own. But careless and almost godless as her life had been for long, long years, she knew it had turned to-day into a new and darker course. She had heard of the anxious, sorrowing friends gathering on the beach, of the crushing grief of the bereaved husband and father. With her own hands she had wrapped Vera's tiny baby in its soft, fleecy shroud and given it to Tante Lise to bear away for its last rest in the stolen shelter of the dead woman's arms.

And now that all this was done, she must hold to the lie and theft. Now, all this was done that Vera, Donald, the child herself, must never know or guess. Now, all this was done that she and Tante Lise must hide not only from a curious, prying, watchful world, but from their nearest, their dearest, their best beloved forever.

And it was the sudden weight of this

secret burden that lay heavy upon Valerie Marchand as she stood looking into the sunset with the stern, resolute eyes of one who accepts her fate. So absorbed was she in her thoughts that she did not hear the light footstep under the cedars, did not see the slender, active, old figure approaching through the mists.

"Truly this is cloudland," said the newcomer as he reached the steps. "I feel adrift, disembodied. Is that you, *ma chère* Valerie, or your ghost?"

"Pierre!" Madam Marchand turned with a quick start. "My dear, dearest brother. When—how did you come?"

She held out both hands in greeting, and he pressed one after the other gallantly to his lips before he answered.

"When? How? By the last steamer from Havre. Why, you may add with reason—why should old Pierre Perot break away from all his patients in Paris and cross a thousand leagues of the sea, which he abhors, but that he still has heart and memory for you and yours, *ma sœur*? *Sacré!* what a chill, unholy place this is, like that

borderland between death and life, where I have so often tried to follow the wandering soul. What brought you and that *petit papillon* of yours here, Valerie, into these accursed fogs? The new husband must be a jealous tyrant, a brute."

"Oh, no, no, no," was the quick, eager answer. "He is all that is kind, indulgent, devoted. He fairly worships Vera. It was her fancy and he humored it as he humors her every wish and whim, like all good American husbands do," she added with a forced laugh.

"American! I thought the name was Scotch," said the old doctor.

"His grandfather was, but Donald has all the American virtues grafted in his sturdy stock. Pierre, he is all that you, that even I could ask. Vera is so happy with him, so wonderfully happy."

"*Bien*, that is good," the old man said briefly. "I thought when I saw this place there might be something wrong. Three times did I miss the way coming from the road, where I left a cursing cabman trying to get his wheel out of the sand. He would

go no further, he swore, for any price I could pay. Is it always like that? Does the sun never shine?"

"Oh, sometimes," said the lady evasively. "One grows used to the mist in a little while." Her manner and voice were nervous, fluttered; something in this brother's sudden coming had strangely disturbed her calm. He was her senior by full fifteen years and in face and figure looked even older; but the keen, dark eyes under the grizzled brows had a light as piercing, if not so brilliant, as that of youth, a light that made Valerie Marchand tremble and fear. So soon, so soon must she brace herself for battle, for self-defense, and with a keen-eyed old veteran, who knew her strength and her weakness, like Pierre.

"Perhaps," he said in a thoughtful reply to her last remark, "one can grow used to almost anything. But for *le petit papillon* Vera, this was an odd choice. She is quite well and happy, you say." The time had come; Valerie Marchand felt she must not shrink or falter.

"Very happy, and as well as we could ex-

pect." Then looking fearlessly into the keen old eyes, the speaker voiced the lie.

"She has a child, you know, just three days old."

"A child," the old man seemed to recoil at the word. "A child! No, I did not know, *Mille Tonnerres!* A child—boy or girl?"

"A lovely little girl." It was easier, now, easier to go on, and her low, tremulous tone seemed full of new joy, new fear. "We have been very anxious, but now, now all is well, and they are so happy, Pierre, so very, very happy."

"Poor fools!" said the old man below his breath. "Poor, blind, young fools. And a little girl, you say, Mon Dieu! So much the worse, so much the worse. A man can fight, struggle, die, but a girl with the Marchand doom on her. . . . Vera should never have married; I told you so a dozen years ago, Valerie, when you saw, when you knew. But," with a shrug of his shoulders, a lift of his brows, "what is done is done. We will talk of it no more. Let us go into your cloud castle, for these vapors

have chilled me to the bone. I am no longer young, as you know, my Valerie, and the blood runs slow. I am not like you who have found the Fountain of Youth. You are beautiful as ever, *ma sœur*, in spite of time and sorrow and care."

"Oh, you were always a flatterer, Pierre," she answered, gladly turning the conversation to a lighter strain, as she led him into the living-room, cheery with the ruddy blaze leaping in the hearth.

"Take that big chair beside the fire and I will bring you a cup of the creole coffee in which your heart delights. Here, within the cloud castle, it is snug and warm. We have even flowers in bloom, as you see."

"Aye, I see, I see," was the answer, and the visitor looked around the room with an artist's approval. "It is a dream world, which has a charm of its own, when the first chill is passed. I see! I see!"

And Doctor Pierre Perot sipped the creole coffee which his sister brought and poured for him with her own fair hands. And Donald Carmichael, coming down radiant and hopeful from his wife's room,

gave him a warm and hospitable welcome, and Madam Marchand breathed freely again. There was no danger even from keen-eyed, kindly, old Pierre. None, none.

Still, she was conscious of a nervous uneasiness in his presence, an impatient wish for him to be gone, for, despite his first recoil from this land of clouds, Doctor Perot lingered at Dunvallon, charming Carmichael with his ripened wisdom and sparkling wit, warring good humoredly with Doctor Wharton, watching over *le petit papillon*, as he still fondly called the young mother—now a vision of delicate beauty as she sat by her fireside in the most bewitching of Paris negligee, and the little babe in her arms—watching too carefully, Madam Marchand thought irritably, as she noted the steady gaze of the keen, dark eyes, the quiet attention to Vera's every word and movement.

"What is it you fear?" she asked him one day in sudden passion.

"All things, *ma sœur*," he answered, a note of pity in his low voice. "The past, the present, more than all the future. But

ma pauvre Valerie, I will not croak. The priest comes to-day to baptize the little one. Pray, my Valerie, if you still can pray, that the good God will take her where no doom will reach her, no curse will fall."

"No, no," she answered, "it would kill Vera to lose her now. The child shall live, must live for her sake. And I have ceased to pray," she added bitterly.

"So I thought," answered the old doctor. "It is in your face, *ma sœur*. For a man it is bad, but for a woman, ah, a thousand times worse."

For, under the ashes and embers of a prayerless, worldly life, the old Faith of his fathers still burned in Pierre Perot's soul. Vera had claimed him as godfather to the child, and when a little later he stood before the good priest who had come to baptize the little one and framed with unaccustomed lips the holy words that pledged the young soul to God's service and love, he was conscious of a wakening thrill in depths that for years had been silent and unstirred. With old-fashioned respect, he accompanied Father Anselm to the road

where the sturdy little pony chaise, in which the priest made his seaside circuit, had been prudently left beyond the sand-dunes.

"I was uncertain of the way," explained Father Anselm. "Mr. Carmichael himself called for me several days ago, but I was absent at another station. You remain here, my friend?"

"No, *mon père*, I leave to-morrow for France."

"But you will remember your responsibilities," said the priest gently. "It seems to me that in this case they are somewhat weightier than usual. We priests feel at once the alien chill of an un-Catholic home. But you have the old Faith of la belle France. You will see that the little one whom you have pledged to God's service is guided—guarded in His ways."

And again the worldly wise old doctor felt the hushed chords thrill and tremble as he answered:

"I am a poor guide and guardian in those ways, *mon père*, but I will do what I can."

"Good," said Father Anselm cheerily; "it is all I ask," and shaking the doctor's

hand cordially, the speaker climbed into his waiting vehicle and, with a warm "God bless you, my friend," drove off again through the cloudy wastes, leaving old Pierre Perot, savant and scientist that he was, gazing with troubled eyes out into the mists, confronted with a problem that, vaguely perplexing as he had found it since his coming to Dunvallon, had at Father Anselm's words taken shape and form. In this dim dream world, where love and joy were smiling under a tragic doom, they could not see where he had stood silent and fearful, lest word or touch of his should break the blinding mist and veil, scatter the friendly shadows that hid the grisly spectres haunting their happy way, one fact stood out stern and clear. The child. He, Pierre Perot, who knew all the past, foresaw the future, owed solemn duty to the child. He must speak, he must warn, he must waken, not Vera or Valerie, but the true, strong, rightful guardian of the helpless little one, Donald Carmichael himself. The child's father must know all there was to watch, to fear, perhaps to face.

And while he stood there, shrinking in the depths of his soul from the task confronting him, there was a strong footfall in the sandy path and Carmichael was at his side.

"Thanks for your courtesy to the good father, Uncle Pierre. You Frenchmen never forget. But it was not altogether my Scotch dourness that held me back. Vera had a nervous spell when the child was returned to her—some emotional excitement natural to such a solemn occasion. I suppose La Madam Mère has taken charge and ordered me out. Shall we take a turn on the beach as an appetizer before dinner? I heard rumors of a crab gumbo to be made for your especial delectation by Tante Lise herself. A tramp to the old Spanish galleon would be just enough to give us zest for the attack. Shall we go?" And light-hearted as a schoolboy, Carmichael laid his hand on the doctor's arm and they went off together through the hollows of the sand-dunes and down the cloud-veiled stretch of the Barrens, which the wind blew in the flying foam of the breakers and the voice of the sea was hoarse and deep, as if with

far-off storm. They paused by the hulk of the old galleon they had set for a goal, and stood looking out over the reef that the receding tide had left, reaching out into the mists, a bare, bleak path into the unknown.

Carmichael, who, since the shadow of death had lifted from his home, had rebounded into all the gladness of youth and life, noticed that his companion was unusually grave and silent.

"You are not in your accustomed spirits this evening," he said cheerily. "Why so serious and distraught? Did you find the solemn Latin rites over our little one depressing? I followed it closely, and to me, unbeliever as I am, it was filled with beautiful significance. It seemed fitting that every life should begin with a consecration to all that is highest, holiest, best."

"You talk like the kindly pagan you are, *mon ami*," said the old doctor. "I wish it were not so; I wish that I could count on your listening to me to-day in the spirit of the believer, who sees beyond the mist, the shadows, the bewildering darkness of earth. It is but a brief darkness, after all, the seg-

ment of a mighty circle we can not trace; but even as the feeble gropings of our little minds show us, it is shaped by infinite wisdom, infinite goodness, by, I dare add, *mon ami*, infinite love. And so, looking at things thus broadly, our little span of darkness does not count."

"This is a grave overture for you, *mon oncle*," said Carmichael with an evident effort at lightness. "To what does it lead?"

"Sit down here and I will tell you." And the Doctor motioned to the broad hulk deep sunken in the sands. I leave you to-morrow, *mon ami*, and there is something I must say to you before I go. It will hurt, I warn you, but I am an old surgeon and know there are times when we can not, dare not spare."

"Go on," said Carmichael, in a low voice, and he folded his arms and tightened his lips like one steadying himself for a death stroke. "You have something to tell me of my wife. Vera is in danger still?"

"In grave danger, yes," was the pitying answer.

"Great heaven! How? Of what? She

seems to be growing stronger, better every day, or did Wharton lie to me when he said so?" asked Carmichael fiercely.

"Oh, no, no," the old surgeon's voice trembled even as he bared his knife for the plunge, "he did not lie, *mon ami*; physically she is well, strong, in beautiful, abounding health. But physical health is not all. There is a malady which neither the good doctor's eye nor skill can reach, one of those mysterious things that come down the generations, blighting and blasting young life in its bloom. You should have been told before you married that the taint of insanity has been in the Marchand blood for full a hundred years—not one in the line direct has entirely escaped."

"Ah!" exclaimed Carmichael, and with ashen face he sprang to his feet. "And Vera, Vera, my wife?"

"Has been twice in a private sanitarium, *mon ami*."

With a low groan Carmichael tottered and sank back again upon the wreck. As if illumined by a lightning-flash that shattered a smiling world into ruin and chaos,

a thousand affirmations of the old doctor's words started into light and life. The secrecy Madam Marchand had demanded in their engagement, the quiet marriage, the sudden severance of all former ties, nay, worse than these, for love would have laughed at shadows of the past, the strange whims, wanderings, caprices, that had made his lovely wife seem to his blinded eyes so elusive, eerie and bewitching in the flame of the death bolt that wrecked his life, he saw and understood all—all.

For a moment, one of those mighty moments that can do the work of years, there was silence, and then Donald Carmichael lifted his face from his hands and looked at the doctor with eyes in which youth and hope and joy had died, but where love, victor even in a supreme hour of anguish and despair like this, lived and ruled yet.

"It has hurt as you said," his voice was a little shaken as he spoke, "but it is right that I should know all this. It would have been better if I had known sooner, but no, no, I will not say that, for then—then it might not have been my duty, my privilege to

watch, to guard my darling, to save her from all harm, all shock—to make her happy even—even under her threatened doom.”

“Spoken like a man,” said the old doctor warmly, “like the brave, true man I felt you would prove yourself. And now, for the old student’s, the old physician’s, the old friend’s advice, Vera has been kept ignorant of this doom, as you know. Of her ‘spells,’ brief and harmless attacks as they have hitherto been, she retains only the recollection we hold of a troubled dream. One never knows how these strange inherited maladies may develop, but I think that with her you need apprehend nothing worse than restlessness, caprice, unreasoning desires for change, perhaps strange fickleness of fancy or unaccountable melancholy, the vagaries of *le petit papillon* that happily for her she is. Let her flutter in the sunlight of your love, and when the shadow falls, as it will at times, watch and guard her carefully; there is always peril in such darkness, even for so gay and glad a spirit as your beautiful wife. But the child!”

"Ah! I had forgotten the child," burst from Carmichael's white lips. "She too——"

"Is of the Marchand blood—may inherit the Marchand doom," the old doctor continued gravely. "It is for the child's sake even more than for the mother's I am speaking to you now. It is the child we must save—help, spare if we can. For she, your child, *mon ami*, may be far different from *le petit papillon*, her mother, and to a deep, strong, earnest, passionate nature the heritage of the Marchands would be a doom indeed."

"Great heaven, if she had died—if she could die," said the wretched father hoarsely.

"It would have seemed merciful, indeed," replied the doctor, "but she lives, *mon ami*, and we must count on her living, and guide and shape that young life as best we can."

"Guide, shape," echoed Carmichael harshly, "what can man do against such a heritage, such a curse, such a cruel, pitiless fate?"

Doctor Perot sat silent for a moment

looking over the darkening wastes of sand and sea as if in their barren desolation he sought an answer. When he spoke there was a new tone in his voice, a note of music that came from the depths stirred by this day's holy word and blessed rite. It was not the wise old worldling, the brilliant savant, but the Pierre Perot, who had knelt at holy shrine and altar rail on a blessed long ago that answered, "I would have her taught to look beyond the doom, the darkness, to the light that is not of earth. I would give her Faith, the living, saving Faith, not the broken beams which science is even now grasping at and hailing as newly discovered light. I have a dozen confrères, *mon ami*, who would talk to you most wisely of hypnotism, suggestion, magnetic influence, and a score of new forces by which they can control, guide, heal the mysterious powers of nerve and brain—forces that are but trembling broken rays, scintillations of the light and truth they refuse to see. Let the Faith which her mother, *petit papillon* that she is, holds so lightly, that I and my sister have well-nigh lost, and you,

mon ami, have never known, be the heritage of the last of the Marchand line. The light, the hope, the trust, the hold, it will give her young mind and heart in unseen power and love will be her best safeguard."

"It shall be as you say, as you direct," replied Carmichael dully. "I look to you for guidance and help. But the light has gone out of my life and home. Henceforth it must all be care and duty. Shall we go back?"

Slowly they returned over the darkening sands to the old gray house among the cedars. Lights were flashing from all the upper windows, the great hall door stood open, Madam Marchand, white-faced and trembling, was on the porch. She sprang forward and caught her brother's arm.

"Pierre, Pierre," she cried, "thank God you have come. Go up to her, calm her, quiet her, if you can. Oh, I have never seen or heard her like this. She has turned from me, from the child, from every one."

"I will go to her," said Carmichael, pushing forward.

"Oh, not you, Donald, not you," said

Madam Marchand, despairingly. Then as she saw his face, met the glance of his eye, her proud strength faltered. "Donald," she cried imploringly, "Donald, you know?"

"All that you have kept from me," he said. "But to my love, my wife, the mother of my child, my heart, my life belong unchanged. Let me go to her. It is my right, my place."

PART II

CHAPTER VI

MARJORIE

“**M**ARJORIE! Marjorie! Marjorie Carmichael!” Through the sweet, sunflecked shadows of the convent garden sounded the name given eighteen years ago in the mists of Dunvallon. “Oh, Marjorie, where are you?”

“Here,” was the answer, and a bright, roguish face peered through the rose-bushes that hid a sheltered nook, dim and sweet with the shadows and fragrance of June; “I have stolen away to finish my book, Bernice, *La Neuvaïne de Colette*. I ought to be practising, I know, but I simply had to see how the story ended before I put it down.”

“They married, of course,” said Bernice, who was a dark-eyed little creature with a sweet wood-flower grace. “That is how all stories end.”

"I wonder why," laughed Marjorie, rising from her hiding-place among the roses.

In girlhood's first beautiful bloom was Marjorie Carmichael—divinely tall and most divinely fair, with rippling brown locks that strayed mutinously out of ribbon and braid, and curled in soft ringlets about cheek and brow, while the rigid lines of the simple black uniform could not detract from the lissome grace of the slender form.

"I wonder why marriage ends all," she continued gaily. "It is a law of literature that I must propound to Sister Clarisse at our next conversation class. It will show reflection on my part and, as dear Sister Clarisse says, I must learn to reflect. But I forget. There are to be no more conversation classes. Bernice, Bernice," Marjorie flung her arm around the delicate little figure beside her, "I can't believe it; I can't realize it. Just think that in a week our school-days will be at an end. Think, we will graduate next Thursday, that in six days and a half we will bid a fond farewell, as Marie Wilson's valedictory says, to our convent home. Oh, Bernice, I really don't

know whether to laugh or cry. It's such a dear, dull, delightful old place, and I have been here so long, so long, nearly ten years, Bernice. What a lifetime! Ten long years!" and through the gay music of the girlish voice there sounded a note, rich, thrilling, tender, like the surge of deep waters under sunlit sparkles and foam.

"But you will come back, Marjorie." There was quick alarm in Bernice's look and voice. "You said you would come back for the post-graduate year. Oh, you will surely come back."

"Oh, I don't know, I don't know," Marjorie shook her head doubtfully. "It's all a delicious haze; I never know exactly what I am going to do, Bernice. Now with you, everything is steady as the fixed stars. That is why you are so calm and still. But I—once I break loose from the bounds of Saint Cecile I am a comet at large."

Bernice's dark eyes grew wistful. "It's nice to travel like you do, Marjorie. You have such lovely vacations."

"Sometimes," answered Marjorie, and a faint shadow like a summer cloud swept

over the sunshine of her face, "and sometimes I don't. Scotland, where Papa's family all came from, was entrancing. So was Switzerland, though I nearly slipped down a crevasse, where I would have been lost forever if it had not been for a nice young man with brown eyes and an alpenstock, who held me up. You can't imagine how grown up I felt when he sent his card to me next day with inquiries for my health after the shock. We were just on the fly to the Riviera, so I couldn't see him. What was the name, now—Builder, Carpenter, Mason, that was it—Mason. It was something about house building, I know. But last summer was not nice at all. Mama was taken ill, very ill, in the night. We were at Saint Regis, in Canada, and planning for a lovely time, when I woke up one night to find her standing over me looking, oh, I can't tell you how wild and strange. I sprang out of bed in terror, and called Papa, and he caught her in his arms and she struggled and cried out like she was in a spasm of pain, and she was ill for weeks and weeks. I did not see her all the rest of the summer. Grandmama took her to Dunvallon and

left me with Papa, who is always a little grave, you know. But last summer he was so solemn and worried and sad, that I was glad to get back to Saint Cecile and my little black gowns again."

"But she is quite well now, for she came to see you Christmas," said Bernice. "Oh, how lovely she is, Marjorie! The girls were all crowding to the playroom door for a peep at her as she passed down the hall—and what beautiful gowns she wears! As Nell Watson said, she looked like a queen—and so gay and glad and young."

"Yes," answered Marjorie, "sometimes she scarcely seems grown up. You see she was an only child, and Grandmama has always lived with her and petted her and cared for her as if she was a child still. Between her and Tante Lise, Mama never has a trouble or care. You should see Tante Lise, Bernice; she is like a witch, so withered and grizzled and old, she must be nearly a hundred years old."

"Oh, not a hundred years, Marjorie."

"Well, nearly, for she nursed Grandmama, and her hair is white as snow. Grandmama," Marjorie laughed a little

low laugh, "I am just a tiny bit afraid of Grandmama. She is so stately and proud. And I worry her, though I don't know why. I suppose it's my saucy, careless ways, so different from Mama. Bernice, I have a dreadful foreboding that Grandmama is going to take me in hand this summer and polish me off."

"Polish you off, Marjorie? You are just lovely as you are," said Bernice warmly.

"Oh, no—not under Grandmama's gold-rimmed glasses," was the laughing answer. "I don't walk, or talk, or laugh, or cry, exactly to suit her. I am too frank, she says, too impulsive, too many things that Marjorie Carmichael should not be. Though I suited them over in Scotland all right," continued Marjorie gaily. "I just loved it there up in the Highlands with grim old Uncle David. Blessed old thistle-burr that he is, he dropped every prickly when I came near. And I felt so at home with him in his old manse among the heather and the gorse. Now, with Grandmama I don't feel at home at all, and never will."

"She prickles, too," said Bernice.

"No, no, much worse, she freezes me up."

"No one could do that," Bernice lovingly tightened the clasp she held on Marjorie's slender waist; "you are too warm and sweet."

"Well—congeals me, then," was the merry amendment. "You wouldn't notice it, perhaps, for I hold my own bravely with the dear old Madame, but I have a distinct sense of being a *frappée*, Bernice, when she is near. But here we are chattering like magpies when I ought to be up in the music hall this minute practising '*La Choeur de Joie*' I know. Did Sister Angela send for me?"

"No," answered Bernice, "she won't want you until two. I came myself to talk to you, to—to—oh, Marjorie—" the speaker's soft hazel eyes kindled into eager lambent light. "I've just been dying to ask you for weeks, but I thought you were off to Paris, or Italy, or some lovely place that I couldn't expect you to give up for me. But if you are going to be polished off or frozen up by your Grandmother—oh, Marjorie, come home with me."

"Home with you?" repeated Marjorie.

"Yes, to Lynnhurst—Aunt Betty has heard so much about you, Marjorie, and she told me to bring you if you would come. But it's such a plain old place after all you have been used to, and Aunt Betty is so old-fashioned and dresses just like she did forty years ago. And one end of the porch is down, only you can't see it for the roses, for Uncle Dick lost a leg at Gettysburg and all the servants but four ran away, and he hasn't been able to make any money since. They wanted to send him to Congress, but he wouldn't go. But there's lots of cows and chickens and lambs and pigs, and horses to ride and drive, and plums and cherries and peaches, and Aunt Betty makes the grandest jelly roll and cream biscuit you ever tasted. She takes the prize at the county fair every year. But, oh, Marjorie, she goes around in a gingham dress and a slat sunbonnet, and there are rag rugs in the parlor, and they haven't bought anything new since the war—you wouldn't like it at all."

"Like it!" repeated Marjorie breath-

lessly. "Like it! Oh, I'd just—just love it, love it all. Oh, Bernice, why didn't you ask me sooner; why *didn't* you? Oh, I'll write. I'll telegraph to Papa. If he hasn't booked me already for an improving tour with Grandmama I'll cry for mercy. I'd give up Paris, Rome, Switzerland, everything, to snuggle up for a while in just a dear, lovely, green old nest as you have told me about, Bernice. I've never known a real old soft woodsy nest, and oh, I love grass and trees and tangled roses and great-grandmothers' houses where people have been living and living for hundreds of years. *I love* them, Bernice."

"But you have one yourself, Marjorie, that grand old place by the sea."

"Dunvallon?" There was a strange note of recoil in Marjorie's voice at the name. "Oh, yes, we have Dunvallon, but—but I don't like Dunvallon, Bernice. It's lonely and sad there. I don't like the clouds and the mists, and the sob of the sea. I was born at Dunvallon and ought to love it, I suppose, but I don't—I don't love it at all. It seems like some big cloud castle where

nothing is clear or real or true, and not a dear sweet home nest like yours. Oh, Bernice, I would love to go with you to Aunt Betty's. Why didn't you ask me before? But perhaps it isn't too late even now. Let us go see Sister Agatha. I'll beg her to telegraph to Mama, to Papa, that I have the loveliest invitation to a delicious place in Virginia, and that I want to go; I am simply *dying* to go."

And eagerly catching Bernice's little hand, Marjorie hurried her friend away through the dim, sweet, shaded walks where white-winged Saint Michael kept his angelic guard, and Saint Joseph rose among his encircling lilies. Far over valley and hillside and leafy grove stretched the fair domains of Saint Cecile. The old convent of nearly a century ago stood gray and ivy-grown amid its modern halls and dormitories like some venerable mother, holding her place still among her brilliant children.

Tennis court and playground were filled with gay, laughing groups, for the yearly examinations were over and the firm if

gentle discipline of Saint Cecile had somewhat relaxed. A glad holiday spirit was in the air. Through the wide open windows of the great music hall there came festive strains of march and chorus, boxes of Commencement finery were arriving in distracting numbers. Everywhere there was eager chatter of ribbon and fan and slipper, and all the suppressed frivolities dear to girlish hearts.

A dozen blithe voices hailed the two friends hurrying to Sister Agatha's sanctum. "Bernice, Bernice, your box has come—Elsie Vane saw it. And there are three for you, Marjorie, three, you lucky girl—all marked Paris."

"Paris!" echoed the "lucky girl" in dismay. "Oh, Bernice, that means Grand-mama and the polishing off, I know. If I could only make a novena like Colette, but there isn't time—there isn't time."

"Oh, Marjorie!" Doubt and fear again overcame Bernice, "I am afraid it won't be half as nice as you think. We're poor at Lynnhurst, real down poor. My god-mother sends me here to school or I couldn't

come. And you with three boxes of beautiful gowns from Paris. Oh, Marjorie!"

"I won't wear them," said Marjorie eagerly. "I won't wear one of them if I go with you, Bernice. I'll send them back. Mama often sends hers back when they don't suit. And I'll get some gingham frocks and a sunbonnet. Oh, come on, Bernice, darling, or Sister Agatha will be off to say her prayers and we will not find her." And again Marjorie hurried her companion on through the white-arched doorway into the long stretch of the academy corridor, where they paused, doubtfully, at a half-open door. "Come in," said a grave, kind voice in answer to Marjorie's impulsive knock, and Sister Agatha, who was a tall, fair lily of a nun, looked up from the desk where she was closing many and various accounts.

"Only," she continued, with the smiling calm of one to whom time is a mere ripple in the eternal sea, "you must remember, my dears, I am very busy." And with the gentle composure which she never lost, even in Commencement times, when the whirr-

ing of young wings in flight sounded through the sheltered coverts of Saint Cecile, Sister Agatha heard the girl's eager pleas.

"But, Marjorie, my dear, this is so sudden; your father and mother have made all their plans for your summer, I am sure."

"Oh, but they can change them; they are used to changing. Papa does not mind that in the least. Often when the trunks are packed and the tickets bought Mama will not go."

And Sister Agatha knew that well. Beautiful Mama's changing ways had more than once perplexed her tranquil thoughts. And after all it was not for her to decide.

"Send the telegram, then, if you wish, my dear," and she gave Marjorie the slip from her desk, and soon the question that Marjorie little guessed was so fateful with weal or woe went flashing over the wires to Donald Carmichael, 2 Carmichael Building, New York:

"My dearest friend, Bernice Brooke, has asked me to visit her at her home, Lynn-

hurst, Virginia, after Commencement. Please—please—please [the word had been repeated in utter disregard of telegraph rates] say that I may go. Marjorie.”

“What do you think he will say?” asked Bernice, as the *élan* of effort having somewhat calmed, the two girls paused in a great window overlooking the old convent garden. “I don’t know,” answered Marjorie. “I would know if it were only Papa. But there’s Mama; one never can count on her. There are times when she loves me to distraction and can’t bear me out of her sight. Last Christmas, for instance, she came in the dead of winter from Florida just to have me for the week’s holiday. And we had the loveliest time together, just as though she were another girl. Then I awoke one morning to find her gone—gone off with Grandmama—in the night. She got nervous and restless and wanted to go back to Dunvallon. She likes it there; I don’t know why, for to me it seems the loneliest place on earth. I don’t like the sea, do you, Bernice?”

"I can't say, for I have never seen it," was the simple answer.

"Oh, you sweet little wood-flower, I forgot. Some day I will steal you off to Dunvallon and let you see it, Bernice. There it is at its best or worst."

"Oh, Marjorie! I always heard it was so beautiful," said Bernice in wonder.

"I suppose it is," Marjorie's tone was reluctant and her violet eyes seemed to have lost their sunny light. But to me it has always been lonely, dreary, a great strange, far-stretching world where there is no home, no shelter, nothing friendly or kind, and the waves come leaping up white with angry foam, and always that deep, low roar beneath as if something were waiting, hungry to drag you down. Often when I was a very little girl I used to wake up in the night crying and sobbing at the sound of the sea. Old Tante Lise would scold and take me in her arms and tell me stories about woods and rabbits and birds and nice homey living things until she put me to sleep. And I grew so pale and thin in the clouds and mists that old Uncle Pierre—he

is. Grandmama's brother, Doctor Perot—made Papa send me here. He said I was pining for the sun. And I was, for I grew glad and well and strong at once. Oh, I love the dear, warm, bright earth, Bernice, and its trees and flowers and living green.

"I will love Lynnhurst, I know, Bernice. We can't make a novena, but let us go into the chapel and say a little prayer that I may go with you; that Papa may say yes."

And Bernice yielding ready assent, the two fair girls, children in heart still, hastened away through garden ways, hedged with close grown box, and sweet with simple flowers to the old convent, that, with its low roof, ivy-veiled walls, still held the life and soul of Saint Cecile. For here was the chapel, dim and shadowy, save for the rainbow light of the sanctuary window, that, softly opalescent through the day, flamed out at sunset into such splendor as had made the little Marjorie of old, fresh from the chill clouds and mists of Dunvallon, dream the gates of heaven were ajar to her childish prayers.

Were they ajar to-day, as kneeling before

the altar she breathed her simple, girlish petition, or was there only Divine Pity in the gaze of the white-robed Form enthroned amid the glories of the paneled window and Divine Tenderness in the call that ran below in letters of golden light?

“My child, give *Me* thy heart.”

CHAPTER VII

THE "MARCHAND DOOM"

FLASHING through leagues of sunlit space Marjorie's telegram had reached its goal, a private office, austere even in its splendor of rare paneled wood and tinted glass and massive furniture, where a man, gaunt and gray and aged beyond his years, sat at his desk, a dozen electric buttons within his reach, controlling activities that pulsed through the length and breadth of the land. For Donald Carmichael was no longer the dreamer of eighteen years ago.

From the wreck of his happiness he had plunged into the vortex of business life, even as his sturdy ancestors of old had plunged into battle and fray.

Some canny Scot instinct must have unconsciously guided his recklessness, swept him despite himself into currents of success. And then—then with all the dream-

ways he had once trodden darkened for him, with no taste for the paths of pleasure still open to him—shrinking from solitude, peopled with memories, fears, sorrows, he dared not face—the Game of Life began to hold, to charm. Half a dozen times during the last eighteen years he had staked his whole fortune on a seeming chance. But the stake had always been placed wisely, warily, well. Now, multi-millionaire, mine-owner, railroad president, with all the power of uncounted wealth in his grasp, he sat at his desk looking at Marjorie's pleading telegram with grave, troubled eyes.

It was all settled, he had thought. Madame Mère, as he still called his wife's mother, had made arrangements for Marjorie's summer. They were to go to Newport, Saratoga, or was it the Thousand Isles? And now—now this sudden pleading for a visit to a friend in Virginia, for a little burst of girlish freedom—what would Vera say to it? Vera, who must never be troubled or crossed or irritated by the lightest shadow, the faintest breath; for such had

been the law since that gray eve at Dunvallon when he had known—through all the long years in which that knowledge had been the haunting, ever-present fear of his life.

Vera, who was planning for gay summer flight, must not be crossed, he decided with darkening brow, and drawing out a telegraph blank, he was about to scrawl the terse reply, "Impossible," when the bell at his office door sounded, and in answer to his response the liveried office boy announced, "Doctor Pierre Perot is waiting without, sir."

"Let him come in at once—at once." Carmichael pushed away the fateful slip of paper and arose eagerly to greet his visitor, who, a little older, a little feebler, somewhat more bowed by his added years, still had the keen, bright eyes, the alert manner of yore.

"*Bien*—at last," said the old man whimsically, as he grasped his friend's hand. "I thought I would never pass your cordons. You are guarded like the Czar of Russia, *mon ami*. But it is necessary, without

doubt, or you would have no freedom, no peace."

"I gave up both many years ago," answered Carmichael, pushing a leather easy-chair to his guest. "It is good to see you again; when did you arrive?"

"This morning," said the old doctor. "And I am here to stay. I am seventy-five years old, my hand is no longer steady, nor my eyes keen; it is time for me to stop work."

"So you will accept my offer," said Carmichael eagerly.

"Your offer!" echoed the doctor. "What? Of three thousand a year to do nothing—nothing. *Non, mon ami*. I have enough of my own, quite enough for an old man of nearly four score years. *A bas* with all your golden bonds. I do not need them to hold me to you and to yours."

"You do not, indeed," answered Carmichael warmly. "I have found you always the best of friends, physicians, counsellors, in my need."

"And there has been no great need of late?" asked the doctor. How has *le petit*

papillon been since I left her fluttering in the glad sunshine of the Riviera last autumn?"

"Well, very well," answered Carmichael. "A sea voyage always does her good, calms, tranquillizes her."

"So it has been with them all—all," said the old man thoughtfully. "The lure is in the blood. It is as if the wild stories they tell among the Bayous had some truth, that the old Sea King Soleau still calls his own. All up and down the gulf he swept, fearing neither God nor man, robbing, aye, and murdering, too, his own wild will, for the Spanish merchantmen were no match for his wicked little craft and her daring crew, until, so the old habitants tell—but perhaps you have heard the story."

"No," said Carmichael, "family history is not a favorite topic with *Madame Mère*. What happened to this old reprobate grand-sire?"

"There are various versions of his downfall, all more or less legendary, for he lived and died more than a century ago. But the most authentic story seems to be that on one

of the vessels upon which he swooped down, like the sea vulture he was, there chanced to be an old missionary, who opened on the reckless sinner with the fearlessness of the saint, rebuking him sternly and threatening him with the vengeance of God upon him and his if he persisted in his wicked course. And old Soleau, blazing out in a blasphemous defiance of everything holy that caused his most hardened hearer to quake, made the good missionary then and there walk the plank into a martyr's grave. It is said that scarcely had the waters closed over his victim when the old pirate fell to his ship's deck stricken in body and mind. He lived for long years a stranded, helpless wreck, raging in his madness at the curse that kept him from his wild, free life on the sea. And in gentler forms that curse seems to have followed all those of his blood and name ever since. The voice of the waters seem to calm, to soothe them, even to call them with some force they can not resist."

"There is one of the race it does not soothe," said Carmichael briefly. "Mar-

jorie has no love for the sea. She pined at Dunvallon, as you know. And, by the way, that reminds me I am in need of your counsel about this fair godchild of yours now. There is a petition I have just received from her," and the speaker pushed Marjorie's telegram under the old man's eye, adding, "She can not go, of course."

"And why not?" asked Doctor Perot quietly.

"Vera has made other plans," replied Carmichael. "She always counts on these summers with Marjorie."

"Very much as a child counts on her Christmas doll," said the old doctor.

"Well, yes," assented Carmichael reluctantly, "something in that way, I must confess. But, as you agreed yourself years ago, this absorbing love and interest, though it be, is most healthful to poor Vera."

"To Vera, perhaps, yes, but how about Marjorie?" asked the old man, casting a quick, keen glance at his companion.

"Oh, she will do very well with her mother for a while at least," was the hurried answer.

"Did she do very well last summer," asked the doctor gravely. "If I understood aright from Valerie's half acknowledgments, when we met in Nice, there was a night whose terrors the child happily did not comprehend. *Mon ami*, the day when men sacrifice their lambs and firstlings is past. The young life has its rights, even if they sometimes touch, trespass on the claims of the old. You must think not only of your hapless wife, but of your child."

"Great Heavens, do I not think of her night and day?" said Carmichael, rousing into sudden passion. "If I did not lose myself in the whirling maelstrom of my daily life, I would go mad myself with horror and fear. But the child—the child so far is all right—absolutely healthy in body and mind, the nuns tell me—singularly bright and happy and winsome. There was a time, as you know, when she seemed to droop."

"In the shadow of the cloud and mist, *mon ami*," the old doctor hurriedly interrupted. "*Diable!* That cloud castle of yours is enough to make any child pine and

droop. Young life turns naturally to the sun. And so I say to you now, not even for her mother's sake must you keep this young life in the shadow—the shadow that all your love, all your wealth, can not lift. Let her go where there is youth and warmth and light.”

“You forget that she is a Marchand,” was the gloomy answer.

“No, but I remember she is a Carmichael,” retorted the old doctor.

“Ah, you have not lived under the shadow as I have,” said the other. “It has darkened all hope, all love. There is only this left,” he pushed the row of electric buttons at the desk with a light touch, “this glittering game that I play for power and gold. But come, I will take you home with me and you shall settle it with Vera and her mother as you please. Advise, prescribe the mountain air for Marjorie. There will be a scene, I fear, for Vera has set her mind on having her pretty daughter to dress and fondle this summer. Ah, she is a child, as you say; she grows more of a child every year; or perhaps it is I who have grown grave and gray and old.”

He sighed as he rose to his full six feet of height—a tall, gaunt, stern man, as unlike the dream lover of long ago as the granite cliff bared by the thunderbolt is to the same cliff when veiled in emerald turf and flowering vine. Together they passed through the great money king's private corridors and entrance hall, where a few silent attendants were on duty, to the closed carriage with the simple Carmichael monogram on its panels that waited in the street.

"You are not at Dunvallon this summer," said the old doctor, as they were whirled away through the busy thoroughfares.

"No," answered Carmichael. "For the present we have an apartment in the Riverside. Since our return from Florida, where we spent a few weeks in the early winter, Vera has been very, very well. But one never knows when there will be a change. Then, of course, it is always Dunvallon with its safety, its quiet, its seclusion, its grim, faithful guardians, Tante Lise and Davy, to watch, to muse."

"And these, the spells, came more frequently, you say?" asked the old man hesitatingly.

"Yes," answered Carmichael; in his face and voice there was the stoic calm of one who had long faced the inevitable. "It is always so, I understand. They—the Marchands—have often been absolutely free in early youth. So I can not hope even from Marjorie's happy promise. She is only eighteen, and has been shielded from all that could trouble or excite her."

"And taught strength and endurance when the trouble must be met," added the old doctor hopefully.

"Perhaps," was the somewhat listless answer. "Though I can scarcely fancy the gentle recluses of Saint Cecile arming a woman very sternly for the battle of life."

"There is a good deal of 'soldier stuff' in those same recluses, as the world has more than once proved," said the older man. "Still, we won't look too far ahead into the battle smoke. As yet the sky is clear for the little one, and we must do all we can to keep it so, and trust the rest——"

"To the fate that for a hundred years has not failed to curse her race," said Carmichael bitterly.

"No," said the old doctor gently. "If you

were not the pagan philosopher you are, *mon ami*, I would say to the *bon Dieu* in whom Saint Cecile has taught her to hope and trust. But, old worldling that I am, it is not for me to preach. Let me rather remind you that Marjorie is a Carmichael, as well as a Marchand, and the healthier heritage may prevail."

"I would be glad to think so, but she is not in the least like any Carmichael I have ever known," was the dreary answer. "We are somewhat of a 'dour' type, as you know, and she is all sparkle and life and light, 'Yer gude wife's ain,' as my Uncle David assured me when we visited him in his old manse, little dreaming, good man, the significance of his words. No, the child is not like me or mine. But here we are at the Riverside, and we must have done with gloom and fear. All that I or my wealth can do for poor Vera now is to keep her bright days undimmed. Happily, she does not realize that those days grow briefer every year."

"*Pauvre petit papillon*," murmured the old doctor under his breath, as alighting from the carriage, he followed Carmichael

into the spacious entrance hall of a great apartment house, Oriental in its luxury. From an inner court there came the plash of a fountain over beds of tropic flowers, the mirrored elevator moved noiselessly up through a marble shaft to a height above the din and reek of lower earth, where a central dome, light and fanciful in its Moorish shaping, opened to cloud and sky. Flickering shadows of palm and orange tree told of the roof garden stretching beyond.

Carmichael led the way to an arched door and tapped lightly.

"I have brought you a guest, dearest," he said, after a sweet, silvery voice had responded, "Come in."

"Uncle Pierre, dear Uncle Pierre," and Vera Carmichael started from her low chair in the embrasure of a wide window and came forward with outstretched hands, a vision to gladden and sadden alike. Though close to forty years, she had all the beauty, the slender grace of girlhood. The golden hair had lost naught of its sunlit sheen, the fair cheek had the delicate tint

of a sea shell. At first glance the eighteen years since that dark night at Dunvallon seemed to have left no trace. But when the old doctor had lifted the lovely jewelled hands to his lips and, still holding them in fatherly affection, looked into the beautiful face, he saw there were tracteries about the smiling lips that were not of time, a restless light in the violet eyes that was not of joy, in the music of the glad voice his quick ear detected the "sweet bells jingled out of tune."

But the wise old doctor saw and heard without giving sign. There was only gallant cheer in his response to her gay welcome. "Back again, as you see, *ma chérie*. The other world seemed sunless and dreary after you had taken homeward flight. That fortnight at Mentone with you and *la Madame Mère* spoiled me for my *vieux garçon* life. My soup, my sauce, even my bottle of Sauterne lost all taste. *Bien*, I said, old Pierre, grasshopper that thou art, we must go where the world is green with youth and spring. So, *me voici, ma belle*, to sun myself forever in your smile."

"Oh, I am so glad, so glad," said Vera delightedly, as she sank back in her cushioned rocker and motioned the old doctor to the easy-chair. "You are so wise and so good, Uncle Pierre, and Donald listens to everything you say. And he will not always listen to me—not *always*," she lifted a dainty finger to silence her husband's eager protest, "you know you do not listen always. But now I shall command Uncle Pierre, and he will command you, monsieur, to obey."

"A dangerous position," laughed the old doctor, "still I accept it—professionally. In fact, I have been anticipating my privileges this afternoon."

"Where—how?" asked Vera with eager surprise.

"We had a little discussion at the office about Marjorie," answered the old man, "and I ventured some advice."

"Marjorie!" the violet eyes kindled. "Marjorie is to be with us again next week. I am counting every day, every hour until I see her. Oh, Donald, I have everything ready now, everything. Her last gown was

sent home this morning—it is a dream—a dream of white and silver. She will look so beautiful in it. Oh, I can't wait until Thursday. Donald, let us go to Saint Cecile and get Marjorie to-night. What is the use of waiting for Commencement Day?"

"But we can not break into the good Sisters' rules, dearest," answered her husband gravely.

"Oh, yes, we can—we can," was the quick rejoinder. "You see how slow and heavy Donald has grown, Uncle Pierre. It's all law and rule with him now. Convent Commencements are such stupid affairs, Donald, as you know. And the nuns insist upon the poor child being swathed up to her throat in a white dress that won't give a glimpse of her lovely neck and arms. Mama—Mama," and the speaker sprang up to meet the stately white-haired woman who entered the room. "Don't you think we ought to go for Marjorie right away? Tell Donald that I can not wait, Mama—I can not wait."

"There, my darling, be calm; it shall be

as you wish, just as you wish." Madam Marchand laid a soothing hand on her daughter's arm while she extended the other to the old doctor. "I thought it was your voice," she said, "though I scarcely expected you so soon. But"—and for a moment the clear, cold voice faltered into trembling appeal—"I—we need you, Pierre."

"Mama does, indeed," said Vera; "she is getting so nervous, so fearful, Uncle Pierre. She is not well, I am sure. Sometimes she sits beside me half the night, wakeful and watching, as if I were a sick child, when I am quite well, well and strong as Marjorie herself, as you can see, Uncle Pierre."

"Yes, I see, I see," and through the cheer of the old man's voice there sounded a note of tender pity that Carmichael heard with a foreboding pang. He was not surprised when, forbearing further mention of Marjorie's holiday, Uncle Pierre plunged into gay reminiscences of Paris, Nice, Mentone. Vera was soon all sparkle and gladness and happy life again under the wise old doctor's charm. They had a bright little dinner

under the palms of the roof garden, with the stars above them and the myriad lights of the great city twinkling far below. And Vera called for her mandolin, and sang for the doctor the old chansons of his own boyhood, until his keen, bright eyes grew soft and dim with tears.

For it was coming, as he and Carmichael and the proud, cold woman, hiding her fearing, breaking mother-heart in the darkness, knew.

It was coming, the shadow, the doom of her race, coming as it always came with feverish outbursts of mirth and laughter and song.

That very night it came—the same stars that had shone down upon the gay little dinner on the roof garden looked a few hours later into the luxurious room below, where a wretched mother and husband kept guard over a moaning, wild-eyed woman, whose youth had dropped from her like a garment, who was worn and haggard and old, and who, wringing her hands in pitiful anguish, wailed out the cry that in these hours of darkness always rose to her lips:

"My baby, my baby, oh, she has drifted away from me far out into the mists, into the sea. Mama, Donald, I must go; I must go look for her, the little baby that I have lost—that I have lost."

And while the rigid lines that the years had drawn in Madam Marchand's face quivered at the cry, Carmichael tried to soothe.

"Dearest, no—no, your baby is not lost. She is coming back to you soon, very soon—your Marjorie—your own beautiful Marjorie—Vera."

But the restless, gleaming eyes only looked vacantly into the speaker's face, the piteous plaint went on, "She has drifted from me in the darkness. Help me to find her, Donald, the little baby we have lost—we have lost."

CHAPTER VIII

AT SAINT CECILE

NO ANSWER yet," said Marjorie sadly, as she and Bernice met next morning by Saint Joseph's fountain. "Still, Papa may be away and the message has not reached him. I will not despair yet. All night long I have been dreaming of the old broken porch under the tangle of roses, and dear Aunt Betty in her slat sunbonnet. I will love her to distraction, I know. Oh, Bernice, there is Mother Madeline in her rolling chair. Dear old saint! She is just waiting at heaven's gate, as Sister Leontine says. Let us go and ask her to pray that Papa may answer yes."

"Oh, Marjorie, no, don't trouble her, she is so weak and old," said Bernice, glancing doubtfully toward a turn of the shaded path where, in the comfortable rolling-chair that for five years had been her only means of outing, a very old nun sat with half-closed eyes that seemed too feeble to bear the sun.

"Oh, it won't trouble her, I am sure," said Marjorie eagerly. "She was always so sweet and kind when I first came here a tiny bit of a girl. I am going to ask her, Bernice, for if she is at heaven's gate, as Sister Leontine says, her prayers will surely be heard."

And Marjorie sped forward to meet the rolling-chair, which a sturdy lay sister was pushing gently through sweet flowery ways.

"Mother Madeline, Mother Madeline," began Marjorie. "Sister Claudia, wait, I want to speak to dear Mother Madeline just for one little minute."

"A minnut it must be, then," said Sister Claudia with good-humored firmness. "She's not to be bothered, dear sowl, by any of your chatterin', childhre, she's too wake."

"Not at all," answered Mother Madeline, and the half-closed eyes suddenly opened, kindling the worn, wrinkled face with life and light, "never too weak to hear my children's chatter, Claudia dear. Why, it's Marjorie, my own little rogue, Marjorie, and Bernice; is it not, dear, little, shy, quiet Bernice? It has been so long, so long

since I have seen either of you," and Mother Madeline held out trembling, feeble hands to the girls, who had dropped on their knees beside her chair.

"Shure, now, this won't do at all," said Sister Claudia anxiously.

"Oh, yes it will, it will," said the old nun cheerily. "Leave me here among the roses for a while, Claudia, and go back to your work, for these are busy days with you, I know, and you haven't time to waste pushing around an old worn-out wreck like me. It will do me good to hear the chatter of young voices again."

"Faith, and I'm thinkin' ye had yer full of it for——"

"Fifty years and more," said Mother Madeline nodding. "Mothers and grandmothers and great-grandmothers, even as some of my children are now, I keep them all in my old heart yet. And I've been sitting in the stillness so long that it is sweet to hear the old chatter again. So run away to your work, Claudia, dear, and leave old Mother Madeline with her children for a while. It will waken me up."

"It's as ye plaze, Mother darlint, God knows," said Claudia tenderly. "I'm only afraid they will tire ye wid their pratin'. But I'll lave ye a bit as ye say; mind ye don't worry her now, childhre."

"Oh, we won't, we won't," answered the girls, who would be "childhre" in good Sister Claudia's eyes until they reached threescore, so does the sweet atmosphere of homes like Saint Cecile confer eternal youth. "Bernice and I are to graduate on Thursday, dear Mother," began Marjorie.

"To graduate," interrupted Mother Madeline, startled. "To graduate! My little Marjorie. Ah, yes, yes, I am growing so old that I forget. It is time, it is time—ah, the years pass so quickly when one is close to fourscore. It is time, indeed—*ma pauvre petite, ma pauvre petite*," and Mother Madeline's voice sank tenderly into the musical cadences of her own early youth, for she came of an old French family that had held rich patrimony and high place in the bayou country when France still claimed those fertile reaches as her own.

"And Bernice has asked me to go home with her for a while," continued Marjorie, "and I have telegraphed for Papa's permission, but there has been no answer as yet. Oh, dear Mother Madeline, you are so good, pray that he may say yes."

"That he may say yes," repeated Mother Madeline dreamily. She had dropped Bernice's hand, but the thin, trembling fingers still clasped Marjorie's. "Let me hear all about it. Where does *la petite* want to fly from the safe shadows of Saint Cecile?" And then both of Mother Madeline's companions burst into eager and voluble explanation, to which the old nun listened intently, her dark, sunken eyes fixed on Marjorie with the same tender pity that had thrilled her trembling voice. For Mother Madeline had known the story of the Marchands from her own early youth, but she had been wise and prudent enough to guard the sad secret even from her sisters in Saint Cecile.

In the sweet stillness of her "waiting at heaven's gate," she had almost forgotten, but as she listened to the girlish chatter this

morning, it all came back to her—the doom, the shadow, the blight that threatened this young life that had opened into such beauty in the sweet shelter of Saint Cecile.

“And so you want to go with Bernice,” she said softly. *Eh bien, ma petite!* Why not? Why not? It may be the good God’s guiding. And so we will pray; we will pray, my children; wonderful things are granted to prayer.”

“That is what I said to Bernice, for you are a saint, as every one knows, Mother Madeline,” said Marjorie, “and it will take a saint’s prayer to change Grandmama if she has made up her mind that I am to go with her. And I would rather”—Marjorie paused a moment for a fitting simile—“go to purgatory at once.”

“Oh, my child, no, no,” said Mother Madeline, “you must not say that.”

“I would, I would,” declared Marjorie with sudden passion. “Oh, I suppose it is wrong and wicked, Mother Madeline, but I always feel bound, prisoned, stifled, when I am near her, as if she were holding me back from all gladness and life and love.”

The old nun's trembling fingers tightened in their clasp of the warm young hand, into the sunken eyes there came the look of one who sees beyond earth, clouds, and vapors into unchanging light.

"Ah, little Marjorie, little Marjorie," she said tenderly. "It is the heart hunger of youth, I know—gladness and life and love. God grant them all to you, dear child, but if—if they should be held back, Marjorie; if they should be held back, *ma fille?*"

"I would want to die—to die," was the quick answer. "I could not live in gloom and darkness and misery, Mother Madeline, oh, I couldn't."

"*Pauvre petite,*" said Mother Madeline, the far-off look growing in her sunken eyes, "do you remember when you first came to Saint Cecile, Marjorie, how afraid you were of storms? When the skies darkened you always ran away to the chapel."

"But not to pray," laughed Marjorie. "It was because the big altar window never blackened like the rest. It always kept its golden light in the fiercest storms."

"*Bien,*" said Mother Madeline smiling.

"Remember that always, *chérie*, in the days that are to come, if the skies darken and the storm bursts. Not always at Saint Cecile, perhaps, but somewhere, *ma petite*—somewhere—there will be the altar window, the altar light that lightens, that guides through the deepest gloom. And when you see it you will think of old Mother Madeline and her prayer that God may bless you with His love, His joy, His light. Ah, *ma petite*, it is joy and love and light that no creature can hold from you. For the storms and darkness pass, little Marjorie—they always pass. And now there comes Sister Claudia to carry me off, so I must say good-by—good-by and God bless you, my children."

"Oh, dear mother, no, not good-by," sobbed Marjorie, for she caught in the solemn, tender tone a lasting farewell.

"*Au revoir*, then," said Mother Madeline, laying her trembling hand on the girl's bowed head. "*Au revoir*, little Marjorie, in the light of the altar window when all the storms are past—*au revoir*."

"Shure, an' it's shakin' like a lafe ye are," scolded good Sister Claudia as she wheeled

her charge away. "I should never have left ye wid thim rattlepates. They've throubled you sore, I can see."

"Not troubled, Claudia—thank God, I am past troubling, for me all the waves are stilled. But for Marjorie, poor little Marjorie, I—I tremble, Claudia. O God, give her strength, child of gladness and sunshine that she is, to meet the storm."

And under the June roses that rose in sweet, thorny tangles over her bowed head Marjorie was sobbing on Bernice's shoulder. "I told you not to stop her, Marjorie, she is so old and weak and trembling. But what she said to make you cry like this I don't know."

"Nor I, nor I," was the broken answer, "unless it is that I feel I will never, never see her again, Bernice, and she was so good to me when I first came here a little, lonely, bewildered girl. And there was such—such tenderness in her voice when she said good-by—such—such pity, Bernice. Oh, I wonder why she should pity me."

"I am sure I can't tell," answered Bernice. "For you are the luckiest girl at Saint

Cecile. It's not every one that can give a farewell feast to the whole class. Is it to be to-day or to-morrow?"

"To-day," said Marjorie, shaking back her loosened gold-brown ripples from her tearful face, and rousing into her gay self again.

"Oh, Bernice, I had almost forgotten the feast I promised the girls this afternoon. Oh, come, we must see about it right away."

And in a little while, quite oblivious of recent tears and tremors, Marjorie was jubilantly presiding over the festive preparations in the great stone corridor adjoining the refectories, where boxes of fruit and cake and bonbons were arriving in generous quantities to Miss Carmichael's order.

In the delightful excitement of this gala occasion, the unanswered telegram was temporarily forgotten.

Marjorie, Bernice and half a dozen eager assistants were engaged in the concoction of a mammoth fruit punch, which was absorbing lemons and oranges by the score, when Sister Jacqueline appeared jingling the great keys that always announced her

approach. Sister Jacqueline had guarded the cloistered portals of Saint Cecile for five and twenty years, and long standing against the outer world that sometimes beat insistently against rules and bounds had given to her the impassive expression of a veteran sentinel—deaf to all things but countersign and command.

Only a faint twinkle in her Irish eyes responded to the hilarious outburst that greeted her appearance.

"Sister Jack, Sister Jack, oh, you want me, I know, me, Sister Jack—me—me—me."

"None of yez but Marjorie, Marjorie Carmichael," Sister Jacqueline nodded toward the hostess of the day, who at the call dropped the lemon-squeezer she was manipulating.

"Me, Sister Jack? Oh, who is it?"

"Wash your hands," said Sister Jack with prosaic brevity, "and come and see."

"Is it Papa and Mama, Sister?" questioned Marjorie, as after obeying this command she hurried away with the good portress.

"Naither of them," answered Sister Jack shortly.

"Oh, don't, don't say it's Grandmama," cried Marjorie in breathless dismay.

"No, nor your grandmother, aither."

"Not Grandmama," said Marjorie with a sigh of relief. "Then who, who can it be?" and she burst impetuously into the convent parlor, where a slender, wizened old gentleman stood in the soft light of the rose-wreathed window.

With a cry of delight Marjorie sprang forward and flung her arms about her visitor's neck and kissed his withered cheek. "Papa Perot, Papa Perot!" It was the name she had given her godfather when she first began to speak. "Oh, I am so glad to see you again, dear, good Papa Perot."

The keen old eyes grew very soft at the loving greeting, the old lips trembled a little as he replied: "Ah, you have warm welcome for the old man still, *ma filleule*. How tall you have grown since I saw you, how fair—ah! the word must come—how beautiful, how very beautiful," and his

voice fell as if the sight of the lovely woman before him awoke some pang.

Then mastering himself, he continued, "You see, it has been quite four years since we met in Paris, and then you were still a little girl."

"In short dresses and hair ribbons, and with an unlimited appetite for *marrons glacés*," laughed Marjorie. "But quite big enough to know I had the dearest and best and wisest godfather in all the wide world. Oh, I heard stories of you everywhere—of all the good you were doing to the poor and the sick and the suffering. You could not hide it from the Sisters and the priests who were on the same track. Oh, it is such joy to see you again, Papa Perot, at Saint Cecile. It was you who put me here ten years ago."

"Ten years!" said the old man in a startled voice, "has it been ten years? Ah, yes, yes, I remember. One forgets as old age creeps on, *ma filleule*, how time goes by. Ten years—they have been happy years, *ma belle*, is it not so?"

"Oh, yes, it almost breaks my heart to

think of leaving, Papa Perot, but as Mama says one can not stay at school forever—dear little Mama—have you seen her yet?”

“Yes, I have seen her,” was the brief answer. “And Papa and Grandmama. I took dinner with them all last evening on a beautiful roof garden under the stars,” continued the old doctor, his light words seeming to come with an effort.

“And Mama was quite happy and well?” added Marjorie anxiously.

“I have never seen her gayer,” was the evasive answer.

“Oh, I am so glad,” said Marjorie. “I was afraid that she was ill again. She is so often ill now. For I sent a telegram to Papa yesterday, and have received no answer.”

“He sends the answer by me,” said the old doctor. “You are to go to Lynnhurst with your friend as you wish.”

“Oh, Papa Perot, Papa Perot,” cried Marjorie delightedly, “you always bring me good news—good luck. But Mama—Grandmama—are they vexed? What will they do? Where will they go?”

"To Dunvallon for the summer, and you would not like that, I know."

"Oh, no, no," said Marjorie, shivering. "I do not like Dunvallon. It seems such a strange fancy of Mama's, when the whole wide, glad world is open to her choice, to go there. But she loves the mists, the sea. I remember once or twice when I was a little girl how she took me far out on the reef in the moonlight and the waves dashed up almost to my knees, and I was so frightened that——"

"*Bien, bien*, don't talk about it," interrupted the old doctor brusquely; "don't think about that childhood of yours, *ma filleule*. Thank God I came in time to save you, spare you, bring you here into the sunshine of faith and hope. We do not like Dunvallon, and will not go there, you and I, little Marjorie. We like the great mountains rising strong-walled around us, and the green forests and valleys, and soft-sloping hills. No wide, lonely, homeless waters for us."

"Ah, none, none," said Marjorie with a happy laugh. "But surely they will come

from Dunvallon to see me graduate. Papa, Mama, Grandmama, all?"

"I fear not," said the old man reluctantly. "The little Mama is not strong, as you know. And she assured me that it would make her quite ill to see you swathed to throat and wrists as the good Sisters command. She wanted to carry you off without waiting for medal or crown. But Papa would not hear of that. And so as little Mama commanded his services, I have come here to do all honor to *ma filleule* in his place. "The little *papillon* of a Mama must have her pretty way," added the speaker brightly, as he noted the shadow of disappointment and perplexity that for a moment clouded the girlish face.

"It is such a strange way sometimes," said Marjorie, "one would think she would like to come—that she would be proud and pleased. All the other girls will have their parents here and I, I—but I will have the dearest and best of godfathers in their place," she added, her fair face brightening.

"And I am going to the softest, greenest,

old tumble-down nest in the heart of the mountains, where the sob of the sea never comes. And since you are here in Papa's place you must take me to town to-morrow so that I can buy a gingham dress and a sun-bonnet, for I will have no use at Lynnhurst for Mama's Paris gowns." And then followed a joyful dissertation on her summer plans, to which the old doctor listened with proper interest, studying the fair speaker the while with keen, watchful eyes. Ah, there was no shadow of the Marchand doom here yet. And though the haunting fear of what still might come remained, Papa Perot banished all care and proceeded to enjoy his godfatherly privileges to the full.

Marjorie led him gleefully through recreation and study room, grove and garden; he was introduced to her "crowd" and class, he was given an honored place at the feast under the elms, where in a charming little French speech he pledged the graduates in a brimming bumper of the fruit punch that the combined efforts of the class had brought to a most satisfactory finish. He met Bernice and lost his old heart at once

to her shy wood-flower grace and charm.

And finally, when the sunset fires burned in the west, and the convent bell chimed its sweet summons to the chapel, for it was the month of the Sacred Heart, Marjorie led Papa Perot in to Benediction.

"Ah, *ma filleule*, no, no," the old man had objected. "For an old worldling like me it is no place. In the great churches, perhaps, I may kneel with the rest of the poor sinners, but not here, not among the angels who dwell in a sanctuary like this." But Marjorie had insisted.

"I am not going to let you run away from me so soon, Papa Perot. I must go sing at Benediction, and you must go with me; and since you are such an old sinner, as you say," she added blithely, "though I do not believe it, I will put you in a dark corner where the angels will not see you." And she led him into an arched recess under the choir, where a few privileged visitors were sometimes admitted to the services of Saint Cecile, and left him there in the shadow, while she joined the singers above, whose girlish voices soon filled the little chapel

with the sweet, solemn music of the old chants echoing down the ages, while the sunset light fell through the altar window upon rows of veiled, motionless forms bowed in love, in adoration, in all the blessed rapture of a faith that sees beyond life's dearth and denial and treads the darkest paths without doubt or fear.

High above all the rest rose Marjorie's rich young voice, upbearing the pæan of hope and joy, and the old doctor listened, his eyes softening, his heart warming, his soul stirring under its gyves and fetters with a dull consciousness of broken wings.

And bowing his wise, worldly head before that sunset altar, old Pierre Perot prayed as he had not prayed for long years, that his *filleule* might be spared the doom that lay dark and heavy on *le petit papillon*.

CHAPTER IX

A SUMMER FLIGHT

“**B**IEN,” said Papa Perot, as five days later he settled his two pretty charges with their boxes, bags and various girlish impedimenta in a Pullman car on the Southern train, “it is done. I go to report to Papa that all is well. And we have had a happy little time together, is it not so, *ma filleule?*”

“Happy,” echoed Marjorie, “it has been delightful. You have been just too good to me, dear Papa Perot.”

And, indeed, as every one at Saint Cecile agreed, the old godfather as a paternal proxy had been a most triumphant success.

Every wish of Marjorie’s had been gratified. From honored place among the social and ecclesiastical dignitaries he had followed the commencement exercises with delightful interest, and each of the fair graduates had received an offering of rare flowers with the gallant old Frenchman’s

card. And now that great day being triumphantly over, he had escorted Marjorie and Bernice on the first stage of their journey, and was reluctantly bidding them good-by.

"Come with us," said Bernice, true to the hospitable traditions of her race. "Uncle Dick will be so glad to see you, Doctor Perot."

"Ah, no doubt, no doubt, the latch is always down in those old homes and the table wide. But my playtime is past. There is work to do now, and I must be old and wise and sad again, *mes enfants*. So it must be good-by now, good-by for a while."

He shook Bernice's hand cordially, kissed Marjorie's upturned face with fatherly tenderness and hurried away.

"Dear old Papa Perot," said Marjorie, looking after the dapper, wizened figure with softening eyes. "He has always been so good to me; and I seem to cheer him up as I never can cheer Papa. Perhaps it is because he has so much money, so many business cares. But Papa is always grave and sad. It is much happier to be poor."

"Oh, do you think so?" said Bernice doubtfully.

"Very much," declared Marjorie. "There is Papa, who has more money than he can count, and he is not happy at all. Nor Grandmama, though she wears the furs and laces of a queen. Not even Mama, though she seems so gay and bright. Often for days together she will be wretched, no one can tell why. Then we must pack up and go off somewhere, anywhere. It is because we are rich and can do as we please. It is much better to be poor and in peace."

And the pretty speaker took off the simple Panama hat, for which she had just paid twenty dollars, and adjusted the tortoise-shell combs in her soft brown locks that she might nestle back more comfortably in her cushioned chair.

"I don't know," answered Bernice, as the train sped out into the summer sunlight. "I have never been rich, and can not say. There are no rich people near Lynnhurst; all are poor alike, except the new people at Rothesay. They must have loads of money, for they have bought the whole

mountainside down to the creek for a stock farm. I'm very sorry, for Rothesay was the prettiest place around; we used to have lovely picnics there every summer. Now it's all walled in, Aunt Betty says, and the Englishman that bought it is a regular old ogre, and keeps dogs that will fairly eat you up. Uncle Dick tried to be nice to him, but it was no use. They say he is a lord or earl or something in his own country, and I suppose is stuck up. But we don't stand for anything of that sort down our way, so we let Rothesay and its owner alone." And Bernice turned her attention to the box of chocolates Marjorie had opened, and the subject of Rothesay was dismissed, the two young travelers chatting and laughing away the hours with the delightful insouciance of eighteen, while the train clambered higher and higher into the mountains, whose rock-ribbed strength was veiled with all the bloom and beauty of June. Higher and higher wound the upward way, curving around dizzy precipices, spanning chasms, piercing the gloom of tunnels, pushing further each moment into nature's fastnesses, to

sunlit sanctuaries of life and growth and bloom. Light mists indeed floated over these wood-crowned heights, but they cast no shade; they had no chill; they were like the censer's breath that stole up to the altar window of Saint Cecile. Marjorie was conscious of a glad freedom, that in all her previous flights over land and sea she had never felt; it was as if some unconscious bondage were broken, and she had come into her own.

And when in the early afternoon she found herself at Hillton, the little mountain station where she and Bernice were to take a stage for the rest of the journey, the new charm seemed complete. With the smoking train vanishing in the distance, all links were broken. She had escaped the chill, the shadow that, like the mists of Dunvallon, had always clouded her summer outings, golden winged as they had seemed; she was joyously free—free—free.

A tall, gaunt, grizzled, crippled old man, slowly furling a tattered red flag, was the only official on the scene. Bernice greeted him cordially as "Major," holding out her

pretty hand to his grimy grasp in a way that caused Marjorie to open wondering eyes.

"Why, bless my soul," exclaimed the Major with a returning grip that made the young traveler wince, "if it ain't Miss Burnice, Miss Betty Brooke's Miss Burnice. Why, you're that grown, and that grand, and that all-fired pretty that for a minute I didn't know you. Not that you wasn't allus 'bout the prettiest girl on this 'ere ridge," added the Major in hasty correction of any ungallant comparison, "but, Miss Burnice, I'll swear to man you've clean beat out your own self."

"Oh, Major, I know you of old," laughed Bernice. "That is the way he talks, Marjorie, to every girl that comes along. This is Major Bolles, Marjorie. He fought in Uncle Dick's regiment during the war and was shot, oh—just all to pieces. Major, this is my dearest and loveliest friend, Marjorie Carmichael, who is coming to spend the summer with us at Lynnhurst."

"Glad to meet you, Miss Carmichael," the Major made the sweeping bow of the early forties. "Proud and glad to meet any

friend of Miss Burnice, especially when it's so beautiful and captivating a young lady. Betwixt you both, you'll make, I'll venture to say, a clean sweep of this 'ere ridge. There won't be a whole heart left."

"Don't mind him, Marjorie," laughed Bernice. "That's the way all the men down here talked before the war. But where's the stage, Major, we thought it would be here waiting for the train."

"It's late, Miss, a little bit late, I regret to say. If you will set down in the waiting-room," the Major waved his hand toward the benches under the shed, "you will find it shady and comfortable. Since the new folks at Rothesay have fenced in the gap the stage hez to go a mile or two further around. It's a durned unrepulican, inhospitable outrage to fence in a short cut, but they've got the law on their side and thar ain't nothing to be done. I don't hold to Englishers settling down in these parts, no how," added the Major; "it ain't constitutional, 'cording to my notion, to have earls and dukes lording it over here. Not that they go by that name, but such is the

strong suspicion in the ridge; and as Squire Williams truly said at the Road meeting, what's the Monroe Doctrine good fur if it can't keep pesky Englishers from fencing in yer short cuts? Put in a protest, that the land was theirn by purchase and they held that the curve along the gap was dangerous to life and limb. As if every free-born American hasn't the right to go into danger when he likes.

"Danger, Lord," chuckled the Major, "they might have talked of danger forty years ago, when we held them old rifle pits with the Yankees swarming like locusts through the gap and—" The speaker broke off suddenly in his spirited recollections as a heavy, lumbering sound reached his ear. "Here she comes now, ladies, sharp on the new schedule time." And as he spoke a prehistoric vehicle drawn by four bony horses rounded the curve of the road and, greeted by a hilarious outburst from a group of small berrypickers, drew up with an ominous creaking of springs and bolts at the Hillton station.

"Here you are, Jim—two young lady

passengers for Colonel Dick Brooke's Lynnhurst," called the Major to the somnolent driver. "Kerridge will meet them at the crossroads. Look out for the ladies sharp." There was a general excited hustle, with numerous small piccaninnies running with bags and boxes, the somnolent driver quickening into gallant life, the Major directing the transfer of the ladies' trunks with the vim of an old campaigner.

"Keerful now, Jim, keerful—strap them on tight; don't forget you let Mrs. Judge Johnson's big saratogy topple into Clum Creek. Step in, ladies; my best regards to the Colonel and Miss Betty. Miss Burnice, I hope to get down to Lynnhurst before long and see 'em myself. It's all aboard, Jim. Now let 'em go." And the Major stood bowing and waving his adieus till the coach, lumbering around the curve of the pine-shaded road, was lost to his sight.

And Marjorie, whose golden ways had been girdled by hard-drawn lines of caste and rank, laughed again with a happy sense of being at large in a wide, glad world where no barriers of wealth were lifted,

where "earls and dukes" had no lordly rights of power or place—a warm, sweet world, that seemed to stretch out shading arms of welcome to her and draw her closer each moment to its heart, as the old coach lumbered on into wilder, deeper ways, clambering rocky steepes, jolting over rain-washed gullies, bumping over stretches of rocky road, until the fair young travelers were almost shaken from their seats. But the great vistas opening before them were framed in leaf and bloom, the rocks were a tangle of wild roses and columbine, the laugh of a dozen little waterfalls came through the fragrant air. And now foaming down the rugged heights a mountain stream widened and dimpled directly in the way.

"Clum Creek," said Bernice. "It's the loveliest place for picnics, Marjorie. And that is Rothesay on the hill above; you can't see it for the pines."

"Good gracious!" gasped Marjorie, somewhat startled as the two bony leaders plunged breast high into the creek, "do we cross like this?"

"Oh, always," answered Bernice lightly. "Sometimes after the fall rains we can't cross at all. Then we have to go ten miles around. I suppose we ought to have a bridge, but we haven't——"

A sudden lurch that threw both girls forward—almost on their knees—interrupted the speaker.

"Geel Geel Whoa!—Durn ye critters, what are ye about!" shouted the driver in stentorian protest, as the horses floundered desperately in mid-stream. "Git up thar, I say, git up! Git up—will ye," and Jim wielded his whip vigorously. A frenzied plunging and splashing was the only response.

"Oh, what is it—what is it?" cried Marjorie and Bernice as with a fierce mountaineer's oath the driver leaped waist high into the waters to investigate.

"Don't skeer, ladies, don't skeer, nothin' ain't a-goin' to hurt ye. It's only that"—another vigorous expletive—"that durned axle gone agin. I knowed that splice warn't a-goin' to hold, and I told Bud Watkins so. Gosh, but me and him will hev it out for

this. To bust me up like this, with a coachful of ladies in the very middle of Clum Creek."

He drew out a knife and cut the traces, letting the freed horses plunge forward to the shore.

"Oh, we will drown here—we will drown!" cried Marjorie in a panic as the waters rose high about the settling coach.

"Oh, Marjorie, no, no," soothed Bernice. "We can walk through Clum Creek, dear, so don't be frightened. Only we would get dreadfully wet."

"You would that sure," said Jim, rubbing his carrotty head in perplexity. "Don't skeer, ladies—jest set still till—till I find a way out for ye."

"Hallo, what's the matter down there?" came a clear hail from the wooded heights above.

"Coach stalled—broken axle—two lady passengers, foundered in Clum Creek," was Jim's answering cry.

"Will be down in a moment and give you a lift," rang out in cheery response.

"It's the Rothesay people," said Bernice

as the two girls stood still dry shod in the wrecked coach. "Don't tremble, Marjorie, they will get us out all right now." And even as she spoke a young man came hurrying down the rocky banks that led to the creek. He was followed by two workingmen carrying a rustic bench, which they had hastily wrenched from its supports in the terraced ridge above. With this held safe above the water, the two rescuers waded out into the stream and soon bore the young ladies dry shod to the shore. Bernice, who had splashed through Clum Creek on many a childish frolic, took the transfer quite philosophically, but to Marjorie the crash, the halt, the surge of the mountain stream were unprecedented perils, the old terror of stormy waters came over her, a sudden darkness blotted out the summer landscape, and she sank fainting into Bernice's arms.

She awoke—choking over some fiery liquid that was being pressed to her lips—to a confusion of voices around her.

"Don't, you fool; don't give her that vile

stuff, you'll strangle her; I've sent for cognac."

"Ain't a-hurtin' her, sir; see, she's comin' to. Hang that Bud Watkins! This is all his fault, and I'll fix him fur it."

"Oh, Marjorie, Marjorie darling, wake up—wake up—we're all safe, Marjorie."

It was Bernice crying to her through the breaking shadows, but looking up she met not Bernice's eyes. Surely, those brown eyes gazing so anxiously into her own, the crisp, curling, dark hair stirred some dreamlike memory she could not shape or name.

"We'll have to get her up to the house, and send for a doctor," the clear manly voice spoke again. "She may be hurt in some way by the lurch—the shock."

"Oh, no—no," protested Marjorie, who was rapidly recovering herself. "I am not hurt at all. Don't, don't cry, Bernice. It was only—only a foolish faint. It is all over. I am quite—quite well again, quite well." And she rose, tottering a little, but resolute. Her hat had fallen off, and her loosened hair lay in soft waves upon brow

and cheek, still pale as alabaster. But the light had come back to the violet eyes, a tremulous smile to the lips, there was soft, bewildered appeal on the fair young face. Never in her brightest moments had Miss Carmichael looked so lovely.

"Oh, Marjorie," Bernice flung a supporting arm around the trembling form, "you're not well yet; you can't be. And here we are fifteen miles from home and the coach broken down. Oh," she turned a beseeching gaze on driver Jim—"can't you patch it up somehow and get us to Lynnhurst?"

"Don't think of such a thing, I beg, Miss," interposed the new speaker quickly. "I will have a safe carriage at your disposal in a very few minutes, if you so wish it. But I really think, as the road is very rough, it would be well to rest awhile at Rothesay. Our housekeeper, Mrs. Marsden, is a good, motherly creature and a capital nurse. Here she is now," concluded the speaker with a breath of relief, as a hearty, middle-aged woman came hurrying down the slope, armed with bottle and glass and spoon, as demanded.

"Mercy on us," gasped the good lady at sight of the foundered vehicle. "It's only what I've been looking for. Such ways of traveling I have never seen in all my five and fifty years. And where are the poor dears that are hurt, Master Jack?"

"These two young ladies were in the coach," answered Master Jack—and Marjorie had revived sufficiently to feel the name suited the pleasant brown eyes wonderfully. "But neither, I hope, is seriously hurt by the accident."

"Not at all hurt," put in Marjorie hastily. "It was perfectly ridiculous in me to faint. I never did such a thing before in my life, but I thought we were going to drown, and——"

"And no wonder, my dear, no wonder," interrupted Mrs. Marsden sympathetically. "It was enough to frighten anybody, I am sure; when I first came this road myself, my heart was in my mouth, and I was looking for painted savages to leap out at me at every turn. And you're all pale and shaken yet, as I plainly see. Let me give you a drop of this to hearten you up."

"Oh, no, no, I really can't take anything more," said Marjorie, whose throat was still stinging from the fiery contents of Jim's flask.

"If you could persuade them to stop at the house and rest awhile, Mrs. Marsden," said Master Jack eagerly. "You see, though there was no danger it was a tremendous shock."

"A shock, indeed," assented the good woman. "And two delicate young things like these alone in this wilderness. I'll never get used to these wild American ways if I live here a hundred years, I'm sure. We'll go up to the house, my dears, and you'll have a cup of tea and a rest before you venture any further. Maybe you'd better get the rolling-chair from the porch, Master Jack."

"Certainly," agreed the young gentleman, starting forward, but again Marjorie protested against giving such unnecessary trouble, she was quite well and strong enough to walk.

"It's something of a climb," said Master Jack hesitatingly. "If you don't mind

taking my arm as a sort of help up the hill——”

“Certainly not,” replied Marjorie simply, as she slipped her little gloved hand on the offered support, and they turned up the wooded slope, Bernice following with Mrs. Marsden. The wildness of which that good lady had complained ended at Clum Creek. The well-kept road that wound up the hill, or rather mountainside, was graded and terraced carefully, the pine forest had been trimmed and pruned, openings here and there revealing magnificent views of valley and peak.

“When you are tired, say the word, and we will rest,” said Marjorie’s escort. “I really don’t know,” he continued—“that I ought to claim acquaintance on so slight a pretext, but we have met before, Miss Carmichael,” and as she caught the pleasant glance of the brown eyes at close range the vague memory they had awakened flashed into vivid light.

“At the Mer de Glace two years ago,” she exclaimed—breathlessly—“you saved me from slipping into that dreadful

crévasse. Oh, I thought I remembered you——”

“And I was quite sure I remembered you,” he answered. “Though for a moment I really thought I must be dreaming to meet you again here——”

“And to meet you again here,” she laughed.

“It is strange, isn’t it? It seems your fate to find me in difficulties.”

“My fate, indeed,” he answered. “You have forgotten my name, I am sure.”

“I am afraid I have,” said Marjorie apologetically. “Though ‘Master Jack’ seems to fit my memory of you most charmingly.”

“Then let me be ‘Master Jack.’ It is really the name I like best,” he answered, smiling. “It belongs to the boyish days when good Mrs. Marsden mothered me. But to a cold and conventional outer world I am known as John Randolph Mason.”

CHAPTER X

ROTHESAY

“**J**OHN RANDOLPH MASON,” repeated Marjorie, and her eyes were sparkling again with their own roguish light. “That sounds like quite an important person. We have just heard that some earl or duke in disguise was holding these heights.”

Mason laughed. “My cousin does happen to have a title, though over here he has made every effort to ignore it. Rothesay is simply a generous speculation of his in my favor, and he is naturally deeply interested in its success. But he has English views and methods which are not altogether popular. Rothesay was a seemingly hopeless ruin when we took possession three years ago. It had been the habitat of owls and bats for a quarter of a century. We have improved things somewhat, as you can see.” And he

paused when a few low, broad steps cut in the rock to ease the ascent gave a sudden view of the old manor house, with its high pillared portico, rising among close-trimmed box hedges and velvety slopes of emerald turf, even its matted growth of ivy pruned into shape and grace.

A grove of noble sycamores shaded the northern wing; to the south a vista opened over mountain and valley to the silver glint of a river in the far horizon; in the west a heavy stone balustrade guarded the cliff that went down a sheer hundred feet to the gap below, that had been fenced in by the new proprietors to the indignation of the county.

And in the wide valley to which the gap led stretched the barns and stables and out-buildings of the great stock-farm that the English intruders were running on methods of their own with triumphant success. According to these methods, the old manor house was as apart from the "farm" as if it stood in another hemisphere. No sight or sound of commercial venture disturbed its sheltered calm.

"What a beautiful picture," said Marjorie softly. "But how still it seems! How—how—silent! Oh, do you really *live* here?" she asked with a little, perplexed laugh. A sudden shadow fell on the bright, handsome face of her companion.

"Live—after a fashion—yes. But it is scarcely what you would call life. We are very dull at Rothesay, Miss Carmichael. My cousin, Lord Earnscliffe, who has been a second father to me, dislikes society. Even in his own country he is a recluse, some are unkind enough to say a misanthrope. I know better—there is no kinder, greater hearted man alive. But he had a great sorrow in early manhood that crushed and, perhaps, to a certain extent, embittered him. So if you meet him and find him a little brusque or silent you will understand."

"Certainly," said Marjorie, with a secret, earnest hope that the reputed "ogre" of Rothesay would not be in evidence during her brief sojourn under his roof. And still leaning on "Master Jack's" stalwart arm, she went on the upward path to the great house. The afternoon sunlight made golden

tracing on the velvety grass, it fell upon the clumps of mountain laurel, and rhododendrons that dotted the lawns, upon banks of myrtle and beds of glowing flowers, yet everywhere there was the same impression of painted stillness of color and beauty and grace, and all things lovely lying in pictured calm that had no depth—no life.

Bernice and Mrs. Marsden came up as Marjorie and her companion reached the broad, low steps of the pillared portico, and they all passed together into the house.

"Oh!" murmured Bernice, as the two girls stood together for a moment in the great oak-ribbed hall, "isn't it beautiful, Marjorie? It's like enchantment. I can not believe this is old tumble-down Rothesay, where we used to play hide-and-seek. I *can't* believe it."

"Come right here, my dears," said Mrs. Marsden, opening the door of a wide living-room. "The most of the house is a bare waste as yet, for it's only a bachelor's hall, and there's little need of drawing-room or parlor in this wilderness. Sit you down there, my dears, and rest; and I'll have a

pot of tea up in a minute that will put the heart in you after your fright and trouble."

And having ensconced her guests in two big cushioned chairs, Mrs. Marsden vanished on hospitable cares intent, and "Master Jack" having also discreetly disappeared, the girls were left to exchange wondering confidences. Bernice learned, with breathless interest, the identity of "Master Jack" and Marjorie's rescuer in the Mer de Glace.

Marjorie heard all that Mrs. Marsden had told Bernice of Rotheday and its master.

"He's a real, *real* lord, Marjorie, and one of the greatest, grandest families in all England, and Mrs. Marsden says it's a burning sin and shame for him to be buried in this American wilderness. But it's all for love of 'Master Jack.' He wants to see him settled well in life, here in his own country, for he can't leave him home or lands in England, as all his estates are entailed and will have to go to a distant cousin. He has been like a father to 'Master Jack' for the last dozen years, sent him to Eton and Ox-

ford, just as if he were an English-born lord himself, instead of a plain American young man without any lands or title. And he is spending thousands of pounds on this place, so Master Jack will have a home and business and—oh, Marjorie, what is it?" Bernice broke off abruptly as her listener started to her feet with a little cry of delight.

"That picture over the mantel! Oh, Bernice, Bernice, did you ever see anything so perfectly lovely?"

And as she spoke she stepped forward for a closer view of the painting that had so attracted her.

It was the portrait of a young and beautiful woman, and evidently the work of a master hand. The graceful figure, the fair, sweet face, above all the tender depths of the dark blue eyes, seemed instinct with life and love. It was as if the wide room, the silent house, nay even the stillness of lawn and garden and grove without, were suddenly filled with the warmth and welcome of this lovely presence. Carved around the picture's oaken frame ran an inscription in

old English lettering that Marjorie stood on tiptoe to read.

"Is it her name?" asked Bernice eagerly.

"No," said Marjorie. "It is Latin—*Non nobis solum*. Oh, Bernice, isn't she beautiful? Mrs. Marsden, Mrs. Marsden," turning to that good woman, who bustled in just then with a tray and teacups, "please tell us whose picture this is. It is so beautiful."

"That, my dears? That is Lady Earncliffe, though she never lived to bear the title. It's a sad story, Miss, and one we daren't tell in this gossip land, for my lord can't bear a whisper of it yet, though she died nigh on to twenty years ago. Ah, she was lovely, indeed, my dears, as every one says that knew her. She was American born, and it was she that was Master Jack's cousin."

"Dead twenty years," said Marjorie, still studying the beautiful face—"twenty years, oh, how sad it seems to go so young—so lovely."

"Well, not quite twenty, perhaps, my dear, when I come to count it. My lord

came into the estates and title the next year, I remember, and it's been seventeen years since the old lord's death; I have the fine black shawl that was given to me for the funeral yet. And I remember, too, when the vaults were opened. The new lord, young and strong as he was then, nearly fainted at sight of his wife's coffin, for they had brought her across the seas for burial, as great folks always do. Aye, aye, my dears, but he loved her faithful and true; and though there's been many a pretty cap set for him, as you can guess, all these years, and many a grand fortune he could have had for the asking, he has been like a cowled monk ever since. Come now, sit down and drink your tea while it is hot and strong, and there's a dish of clotted cream and some English biscuit. You've got a long ride before you yet, and it's glad I am to have a pair of pretty young faces across the table from me again, for I am sorely lonesome sometimes in these wild American mountains. It will be a bright day for me when my lord turns back to the old country again."

"Is he going back again?" asked Marjorie as she and Bernice proceeded to do full justice to the good lady's clotted cream and tea.

"I think he will, my dear, for what business will he have staying in this strange land now that he has set everything running fair and smooth for Master Jack? Though we will miss the lad sore, for he has been the one bright thing in my lord's life since he was a slip of a boy of ten, when his widowed mother married again and the new husband went through with all her fortune. There would have been small chance for poor Master Jack, if my lord had not stepped forward and offered to care for the lad, who had been a prime pet with his dead lady, and keep him as his own. But he can leave him nothing, as the estate must go down by English law in the line direct, though truth to tell it's a sore thought to my lord, for his cousin, the heir, is not at all to his liking. And so he took the fancy to make a home over here for Master Jack to have and hold for his own and his children and grandchildren after him. A fine young gentleman he

is and deserving of it all. There's not a bolder, braver heart in either England or America——"

And just at this point Master Jack re-entered the room, bearing a blue Delft bowl full of luscious strawberries, which he added to the feast, that, with the young gentleman seated between his two guests, proceeded most pleasantly.

So pleasantly, indeed, that the strange music of girlish laughter rippled out through the open window into the stillness of Sycamore Walk, where a straight, soldierly man, vigorous and active in spite of his silvered hair and furrowed face, was striding homeward, attended as usual by the two great wolf-hounds that were the terror of the country.

He paused, startled at the unwonted sound, and even Boar and Ben pricked up their ears to listen.

Again it came, Marjorie's laugh, alone now—low and sweet and silvery as a chime of silver bells.

A spasm of pain twitched the stern, strong lines of the listener's face—a laugh

like that had once made the music of his life—a laugh just as silvery sweet.

Who could it be? Mrs. Marsden had no friends in this strange land. And he strode forward to the south window, that half hidden in climbing jasmine, opened on the living-room, and stood there unseen—himself looking at the bright young group gathered about the luncheon table.

Marjorie sat facing him, her violet eyes alight, her cheeks aglow, a vision of youth and hope and joyous life that brought such a rush of anguished memory as made the strong man suddenly faint and weak. For one moment it seemed as if the fair picture from over the mantel had stepped from its frame into beautiful life. Then looking again he mastered himself. It was but a moment's fantasy—this girl with the golden hair smiling in his home was all unlike the love of his life—taller, fairer, her young face all unwritten—no shadow of thought—no light of love in the roguish, laughing eyes.

And yet, great heavens, how that first glimpse of her had stirred the silent chords

of his heart! And in grim self-scorn of his passing weakness, he turned away and strode off again, past all the beauty of lawn and garden and grove, into the untamed wilds of peak and gorge beyond.

It was past nightfall when he returned. Mrs. Marsden was in a fever of unrest at the delayed dinner, but Master Jack, who knew his kinsman's ways and was quietly smoking on the porch, asked no questions. When the formal evening repast, served, in traditional state, was over, and the two were out again in the summer starlight, it was Lord Earnscliffe that asked, "Who were our visitors to-day?" And Master Jack told the story of the afternoon accident.

"I put William and the double carriage at the ladies' disposal. They reached Lynnhurst at sundown. One of the young ladies is a niece of Colonel Richard, whom, I think, you have met—a fine old typical Virginia gentleman. The other, Miss Brooke's friend and guest for the summer, is the daughter of the New York capitalist, Donald Carmichael."

"Carmichael," repeated the older man,

"Carmichael—the name is in some way familiar to me."

"You have heard of him, no doubt, in business circles. He is a man of great wealth and importance. Curious to say, Miss Carmichael and I were not altogether strangers. We met two years ago on the Alps, where I and my stout alpenstock saved her from a dangerous fall."

"*Fata viam invenient*," quoted Lord Earnscliffe drily.

The younger man laughed somewhat consciously. "I felt a little that way myself when I saw her again fainting at our Creek this afternoon. Really, sir, we will have to put a bridge there. That ford is a prehistoric outrage on the traveling community. And to have a patched axle breaking in mid-stream. It was all I could do to keep from breaking that stupid driver's head."

"Fight it out, my boy, fight it out with your mountain savages," was the rejoinder. "It's your battle now. I am going home."

"Home!" echoed Master Jack in a startled voice. "When, sir—and—and—why?"

"When? In a few weeks, I think, as soon as I can make some final arrangements here—and—why—you ask why? Because—because—I have idled here long enough."

"Idled," repeated the younger man warmly, "great heavens, sir, don't say that, you have done everything for me. And I fancied—hoped—that having no very close ties in England, you might find it pleasant here."

"I have," was the answer. "This building up of a home—a fortune—a new life for you, my boy, has been more of a happiness than I have known for years. But it is done—you have no further need of me, Jack."

"Don't say that, sir," pleaded Jack again in a moved voice. "You have been friend, father, everything to me for the past fifteen years. Have I displeased or offended you in any way that you should give me up?"

"Offended, displeased me? Not at all, you are everything that I could wish you. But other duties call me, Jack—Earnscliffe, Eveleth, my people—with their needs and sorrows, and claims. The old motto—*Non*

nobis solum—you know, Jack. *Non nobis solum*. We must not forget.”

“And you have not forgotten,” was the earnest answer. “You have lived for others, when—when”—he hesitated.

“It would have been easier to have died for them,” continued his companion quietly.

“Yes, you are right there, Jack. There was one weak, coward moment years ago when I came very near slipping off the bond of life, and it was your boyish hand that held me back, your boyish voice that gave me the old watchword—her watchword, *Non nobis solum*. Not for ourselves alone is life given; not for ourselves alone must it be cast away, and not for ourselves alone must it be lived, Jack. And so in a dull gray world that had no light of hope or love, I have lived on, and in this dull gray world, without light of hope or love, I must live on to the end. I bear this shadow with me; I cast it unwillingly—have you not felt it even here?”

Jack started as he remembered Marjorie’s wondering words at the hush and stillness of Rothesay, as he recalled his own reply.

"Really I have never considered it," he began.

"Then it is time to consider it now," was the grave reply. "I have given you a home, Jack. It is right, it is natural, that you should fill it with love and beauty and joy, with such happy voices and glad laughter as I heard echoing through its stillness to-day. My lonely, loveless life would be a shadow upon its sunshine, my boy, and so I must not stay."

"Ah, you are sad, depressed, a trifle morbid to-night, dear friend," the younger man rose and standing behind his companion laid his hands lightly upon the silvered hair. "I can not imagine any sunshine coming into my home or life which you would not share and bless."

"Not even such sunshine as I saw sparkling on you from a pair of violet eyes to-day?" asked the other significantly.

"Ah, you saw them," was the laughing response. "It was you who passed the window. Not even that light, dazzling as I confess I found it, could ever blind me to

all the past, present, and future that I owe to a friend, a father, such as you."

"Ah, it is coming, my boy, it is coming," and the older man spoke in a tone of tender sadness. "I saw it in your eyes to-day; I hear it in your voice to-night. The love that makes or mars a man like you is coming into your young life. I will wait, Jack. I will see you through."

CHAPTER XI

LYNNHURST

TWO days later found Master Jack, mounted on his favorite horse Pasha, making his way over bridle paths, which, according to topographical information, gained from some of the oldest sable inhabitants about Rothesay, found a "short cut" to Lynnhurst.

Tangled with wild grape and thorn bushes, climbing very Jacob's ladders of jagged rocks, scrambling down again into ravines, it proved a short cut trying to the traveler's soul as well as body.

When for the sixth or seventh time he had been beguiled into some wide open false turn, that led to an impasse of mountain spring or cabin, the rider drew rein, and with an outburst of vigorous English at such modes of transit, looked about him for a guide.

Tottering down the delusive trail came a

grizzled old negro bearing a battered bucket full of blackberries. He touched his ragged hat at sight of the young man. "Good day, Uncle," was the friendly response, "can you show me the way to Lynnhurst? It will be a quarter for you," and he pulled the coin from his pocket.

"Lynnhurst!" the old "uncle" paused, steadying himself against a tree trunk to stare and chuckle, "Lynnhurst, Marse Dick Brooke's? Lawd! Lawd! why yo'se way outer de road—yo' must hab tuk de wrong turn sholy."

"Surely, indeed," answered Master Jack with grim good humor. "I have been taking wrong turns surely and steadily for the last two hours. It looks a trifle ominous," he added with a short laugh.

"It do, sah, it do, indeed," assented "uncle" with a grave nod. "Dis hyah road is ominous, dat am de word dat fits it sho. It keeps a peekin' and turnin' ebery which way till yo' don't nachally know whar yo' is gwine or how yo' is to get dah. It sho' am a circumlocutin' road.

"Just how does it circumlocute to Lynn-

hurst?" asked the young gentleman. "I was told it was twelve miles, and I am sure I have traveled twenty already. I'll double the quarter, Uncle, if you'll shuffle along ahead and show me where and how to turn."

"All right, young Marse, all right," was the cheerful reply, and the speaker quickened into new life at the offer. "Come 'long and I'll lead yo' straight an' true. Lil' bit ole and shaky now, sah, but ole Zach hez been trabelin' dese hills, man and boy, nigh onto eighty years, I reckon. I wuz one of old General Ben Brooke's people 'fo de wah, so was my father, sah. No low-down free niggah stock 'bout me, sah. I was born and rizzed in one ob de fustest famblies ob dis State."

"And you show it, Uncle," said Master Jack, suppressing a smile as this scion of fallen greatness shuffled along in his rags and tatters before him.

"I does, sah, bress de Lord I does. I ain't nebba come down to dese hyah free niggah ways—crap shootin' an' chicken stealin' and sich like. Ole missus she set my feet on de path ob de Lord more'n seventy years ago,

and I ain't nebba departed from it. My, my, but she wuz a powerful good woman. And de way she ruled Lynnhurst! Black and white, master and man, dey all jes' jumped to ole missus' word. An' she a lil' bit of a black-eyed woman dat looked as if you could blow her away wif a breaf. Ah, dem was days," continued Uncle Zach with a long-drawn sigh, "dem was days we will nebba see ag'in. Plenty ob corn cake and bacon and good red herrin', de smokehouses full, and de mills a-grindin', and de gals up in de weavin' room turnin' out all de good homespun you'd want. Dem was days sho enuff."

"And the war ended them," said Master Jack, who found this antebellum point of view somewhat novel.

"Yes, sah; yes, Marse Dick and Marse Lew went off wif dere regiment, but ole missus, she was a widow den, holdin' on, toof an' nail, 'gin de change and de trouble and de bad luck heapin' round her—holdin' on 'gin 'em toof an' nail. 'Peared like she got littler and thinner and her ha'r whiter, and her eyes bigger and blacker

ebbery day. But de bad luck kep' on crowdin' her too close. De niggahs scooted away, and de Yankees come down de valley, and last of all a sojer galloped up wif de news dat Marse Lew was shot down dead in de battle—dey couldn't bring him home. Den po' ole missus jes drapped in her tracks. My old Nance, dat was libbin' den, and Marthy Jane, dey lifted her upstairs, and befo' de doctor, or de preacher, or anybody come, ole missus called for me. Lawd! Lawd!" and the narrator, who was walking along now close to his listener's horse in a full flood of retrospection, shook his grizzled head mournfully, "when I got in dat room and saw ole missus in her big four-post bed wid de tasseled curtains a-propped up in de ruffled pillows, wid de big black eyes a-burnin' in her lil' white-peaked face, my legs began fo' to tremble like I was a stannin' befo' de Throne. 'I'se dyin', Zach,' she says, and den I fell plumb down on my knees and began to blubber. 'Oh, doan say dat, ole Missus, doan yo' say dat,' I cries.

" 'Get up,' she says, soft an' kind. 'Don't be a fool, Zach. You're a man ef yo' skin is

black—ebbery inch of yo'. I'se dyin', Zach, and I'se gwine to leave yo' in charge hyah in my place. In my place, Zach—do you understand, Zach—*in my place*.' 'Yas, Missus,' I sniffled, for I couldn't speak clar.

"'Yo'se to take keer of eberything jes' like I hab fo' Master Dick, yo'se to stay right hyah and not let anybody drive yo' off, yo'se to keep all yo' can for him till he comes back. An' den yo'se both to find Marse Lew and bury him by me under the old lindens, fo' I can nebber rest until my boy lies at my side. Will you do all this for yo' ol' dead missus, Zach?' and she held out her li'l' thin white han' to me.

"An' I fell down on my knees agin and put dat lil' white han' to my black lips and swore befo' de good Lord in hebbin dat I'd do all she said if I was killed fo' it."

"And you kept your word, I am sure," said Master Jack warmly, for the old tattered scarecrow shuffling beside him seemed to have taken new shape and meaning to his eyes in the light of the long ago.

"Yes, young Marse, yes, I kep' my word. It was a harder word dan I t'ought, for de

sojers, both sides, came down de valley and de sword ob de Lord and Gideon it cut a swath sholy in dis hyah place. Dar was fightin' and killin' and burnin' all long de ridge, and de rocks thundered and smoked wit de big guns, as first de blue and den de greycoats ruled de gap.

"But me and my ole woman held Lynnhurst troo it all. We buried de silver and hid de china, and run de best cows and horses fur back in de swamp, and when de greycoats come by Nance wuz de old fambly mammy—a-keepin' Cunnel Richard Brooke's home from harm; and when de bluecoats galloped down de lane, I was de 'telligent contraband—ready to swar and serve de Union gemmen, and twixt us bofe we held on to Lynnhurst somehow for t'ree long years. Ole missus was a-watchin' us close. I knowed well, we used to hear her tap, tappin' 'long de halls; sighin', soft like, in de big empty rooms and rustlin' round 'mong de roses. Lord, de way dem roses growed and bloomed dem t'ree years! And den Marse Dick come back wif only one leg and went cross to Maryland and mar-

ried Miss Betty Brent, his ol' sweetheart, and me and Nance showed him whar de silver was buried, and de china was hid up de big chimbley, and whar de four head of horses and de mule and brindle cow was run off down in de slush lands, whar the sojers couldn't march. An' den I gib him missus' las' words, and we went off to de Rappahannock, whar Marse Lew was buried, and brought him home. An' we laid him down under de lindens at ole missus' side so she could rest in peace."

"Well done," exclaimed Master Jack from the bottom of his warm young heart. "I don't think I ever heard a finer story of faithful service. And I hope," he cast a pitying glance at Uncle Zach's rags and tatters, "I hope it was properly rewarded and that Marse Dick was good to you."

"Marse Dick couldn't be nuffin else, sah," was the dignified response. "Marse Dick, as ebbery one knows hyah, is one of de fustest gemmen in de State. Lynnhurst ain't, so to say, what it wuz in de ole days, but wif only one leg and four ornery niggers you can't run t'ings in de ole-time way. Dar

ain't a finer lady dan Miss Betty in de lan', though she do come from Maryland, and hez different ways.

"De Lynnhurst people in de ole times was all Piscopal, or Methodies. Dey used to hev powerful camp meetin's in dose days, and de sperrit used to move over dese hyah hills, stirrin' de sinners sholy. Dey used to crowd to de mourners' bench a whoopin' and cryin' for mercy. When my own Lizy Jane found de Lord she was took with a fit dat lasted two hours. But Miss Betty's dead set agin all dat—she's a Catholic."

"Oh, she is?" said Master Jack thoughtfully.

"A regular Romish Catholic," continued the old man. "Dere was a deal of preachin' 'bout it when she first came to Lynnhurst, but we've got used to it now. Marse Dick jes' stands back and gives her de way, and she has crosses and candles and graven images to her likin'. If old missus didn't hev Marse Lew beside her she'd rise from her grave, I know, it would go so agin her. But Miss Betty is mighty good for all dat, a mighty good woman. And Miss Burnice



“‘If dar isn’t de hull crowd picknickin’ at de Gypsy Spring. Hi, ye down dar ! Marse Dick, Miss Betty, Miss Bernice !’”—*page 201.*

dat she's a raisin' is about de angelest young lady I ebber seen. And bress de Lord." Uncle Zach suddenly paused at a turn of the circumlocuting way and thrust his old grizzled head through a thicket of tangled undergrowth. "If dar isn't de hull crowd of 'em picnickin' at de Gypsy Spring. Hi, ye down dar, Marse Dick, Miss Betty, Miss Burnice."

"Hallo!" was the hearty response from below. "That you, Uncle Zach? Come down, you old coon, and have some dinner."

"Gemmen up hyah a-lookin' for Lynnhurst," announced Uncle Zach.

"Bring him along," called the voice again. "Plenty of fried chicken here going begging."

"He'd nebber get down dar on horseback, Marse Dick," remonstrated Uncle Zach.

"That's so, old man. You take the horse around and let the gentleman scramble." And the "gentleman" leaped from his horse at the word; he had seen enough to urge descent into any Avernus.

For, edging Pasha close to the undergrowth that bordered the bridge-path, he

had looked down some fifty feet of rough beetling rock to a soft green glen, shaded by mountain oaks, where, gathered around a bubbling spring, was a group charming enough to hold an artist's eye.

Marse Dick, a straight, slender old man, hearty and vigorous still despite his lost leg; Miss Betty, a strong, sweet-faced woman, some years his junior; Bernice, her delicate cheek wearing a fresh mountain bloom. Master Jack's eyes swept all these in a brief, passing glance, to rest on a graceful figure, in a simple gingham dress, her pink sun-bonnet swinging by its strings to her pretty neck, her slender waist encircled by one of Miss Betty's biggest aprons. Marjorie, with her sleeves rolled up over dimpled arms, delightfully engaged in the concoction of a claret punch, under Uncle Dick's experienced direction.

"One more tablespoonful of sugar and dissolve it well, my dear, not too much lemon, it destroys the pleasant tang of the wine; now, Bernice, a little wine and ice from the bucket."

But Master Jack heard no more. Forget-

ful that he was a stranger, an intruder, perhaps, who would even be regarded as a foreign enemy in this mountain camp, he was taking his swinging, sliding way down the rocks, and in a moment stood flushed and breathless in the pleasant group that greeted him with hospitable welcome.

"Glad to see you, sir, glad to see you," said Uncle Dick cordially, when Marjorie and Bernice had introduced Mr. Mason. "Rather an unconventional way to receive a visitor, but you would have found no one at the house, so I thought you might as well shorten the way by a scramble."

"Oh, it's a wonder he didn't break his neck," laughed Marjorie as she looked up the rocky steep.

"Not at all, my dear, not at all. When I had as good a pair of legs as his to call my own this ridge was my daily homeward pathway. It cuts off a good half mile. Sit down, Mr. Mason, sit down and have something to eat. You've had your luncheon, of course, but a ride from Rothesay is a sharpener. Betty, my dear, bring out some of your cold chicken and biscuits for Mr. Ma-

son, while I give him some claret punch just mixed by Hebe's own rosy fingers."

And Aunt Betty opened her basket again and brought out the delicious fried chicken and the cream biscuit that only she could make, and Marjorie filled a cup with ruby nectar, and there by the Gypsy Spring, the gates of a new Eden opened wide for Mr. Jack Mason, and he entered into enchanted ways, dazzling with rainbow light in which the gleam of the angel's flaming sword was lost.

In that first hour by the Gypsy Spring Master Jack realized that both his head and heart were gone. The lovely young traveler of the Mer de Glace had been a vague, haunting vision for the last two years, the fair girl guest of Rothesay had shaped that vision into a beautiful reality, but this Hebe of the Gypsy Spring stepped at once as if by royal right to her throne and crown.

The wonderful afternoon that followed was touched by a glamour that Master Jack in all his bright young life had never known.

They turned back from the Gypsy Spring

to Lynnhurst, that lay half a mile distant, over the wide, weed-grown wastes of a heritage that the broken-down old soldier had never been able to reclaim.

The tender grace of a day that is dead lay softly upon all things; upon the untilled fields, gay with golden-hearted daisies; the fallen fences, veiled with sweet wild growth of flower and vine; the old orchard with its gnarled trunks and bending boughs upon the graves beneath the lindens, where the winding path seemed to pause reverently for a moment, and then widen and smooth as it climbed by old-time garden beds, bordered with box and privet, to the house—the long, low, rambling old house with its east wing down, and its broken porch buried in a wild tangle of roses. But neither failure nor defeat had been able to wrest from Lynnhurst the blessed charm of home, the home for which Marse Dick had fought, and Marse Lew had died; to which old Missus had clung with her brave heart breaking; that Uncle Zach had held at her command against fire and sword in the days that tried men's souls.

Master Jack no longer wondered at the old man's tale of loyalty and love as he lingered on the old porch in the deepening twilight, feeling that he was outraging all conventions by so lengthy a visit, but unable to tear himself away.

He had made good with Uncle Dick, who had traced his name and lineage from Virginia's noblest sons, and was ready to stump the county liberally in his defense; he had charmed Aunt Betty, whose only boy, had he lived, would have been just his age; he was already fast friend and comrade with Bernice. But as for Marjorie—Marjorie! ah, there thought and fancy failed; all was a dazzling rainbow light, in which past, present, and future seemed to merge.

After tea in the low, wainscoted room, where the soft light of candles fell on the quaint old china and silver "hidden and buried" forty years ago, other guests came to break the delicious spell—gentle, white-haired old neighbors, gay girls from the adjoining homes, gallant young cavaliers afoot and on horseback.

Mr. Mason was introduced to them all, and Pasha, brought up by his order an hour ago, was pawing impatiently at the garden gate, warning his master it was time to be gone.

Making his adieus as briefly and gracefully as possible, he had turned down the box-bordered path when a low, sweet voice called his name. Marjorie hurried out of the fragrant shadows to his side.

"Aunt Betty"—she had already adopted Bernice's names for her kindly host and hostess—"Aunt Betty sent me for you. She didn't realize that you were going back over that steep, rough road in the darkness. She says the moon will be up in half an hour and you must wait."

"She need not fear," answered the young man. "Pasha is surefooted as a cat. But it is very good of you to come and warn me."

"Oh, not at all," answered Marjorie simply. "After all your kindness to us I couldn't let you go out in the darkness and break your neck. Oh, I really wish you would wait."

"Would fears of my broken neck disturb your peace and comfort?" he asked.

"Dreadfully," she replied. "And it would be very unkind of you to spoil the loveliest holiday I have ever known. Oh, isn't this the dearest, sweetest, homiest place you have ever seen? I have never been so happy in my life—never—never—never. And I am so afraid something will happen to break it all up." The sweet voice trembled with a vague, half-formed fear that stirred Master Jack's heart.

"Nothing shall happen that I can avert," he said quickly. "I promise you that. But since you wish it, I will wait for the moon-rise. Shall it be here under the oaks?"

"No, no," she answered. "Aunt Betty sent me to bring you back." And if Master Jack's masculine vanity had been flattered for a moment, the childish simplicity of Marjorie's reply crushed it quite.

He turned back with her to the house and sat on the wide, rose-wreathed portico with the rest, and took his part in the chatter and laughter and song, for young Tom Barton had brought his banjo, and Bernice had her.

guitar, and half a dozen others had full, rich voices that swelled blithely in glee and barcarole.

Then as the moon rose, flooding peak and ridge and slope with silvery radiance, Uncle Dick, who was leaning back in his chair, his hands clasped behind his head, his fine old patrician face upturned to the luminous sky, spoke:

"Now it is the old folks' turn. Betty, my dear, what was that lovely thing Miss Marjorie sang for you last night?"

"The Ave Maria," said Aunt Betty softly. "Will you give it to us again, my dear? I used to sing it myself long ago."

And Marjorie sang, and as the sweet voice thrilled through the breathless silence, all the vague, half-forgotten music of Master Jack's life seemed inwoven in the tender, holy strain—cradle song and vesper hymn and chant; the note of the lark in English meadows; the warble of the nightingale beneath his windows; the joyous burst of the silver trumpets that he had heard in the dome of St. Peter's; the solemn hope breathing through a kingly requiem

to which he had listened in an old world cathedral three years before, all the melody, sweet and uplifting, that had swept through his young life seemed to wake again as Marjorie sang. And as he rode homeward that night over moonlit ways, from whose darkened perils her sweet voice had withheld him, he felt that that voice henceforth could call—lure—guide him as its owner willed.

Already Fate had found its way.

CHAPTER XII

YOUNG LOVE'S DREAM

TWO weeks had passed, two sunlit, flower-strewn weeks. The "Major's" prophecy had been fulfilled, Lynnhurst had become the center of attraction for a radius of full twenty miles around.

Never since the prehistoric days of Miss Susannah Matilda Brooke, who had four duels fought for her fair hand, and whose portrait, short-waisted and rose-garlanded, still showed the roguish loveliness that had strewn ridge and valley with victims, had there been such royal reign at Lynnhurst. It was a dull or stormy evening, indeed, when less than a dozen horses were tethered to tree, fence or gate-post, when banjos and guitars were not tinkling their love tunes on the portico, when Aunt Betty's big blue Canton china bowl was not brimming with fruit punch or lemonade in the low-roofed dining-room, and Aunt Betty's far-famed

seed-cakes, jelly cakes, cup cakes were not hospitably set out for the refreshment of visiting cavaliers. Reciprocal entertainments were the order of the day and night; all the old homes on the ridge and in the valley had opened their doors; there had been dinners, dances, picnics galore.

And trampling down all the thorns and briars of prejudice, the young master of Rothesay followed his fair enchantress on her triumphant way, blind to all things but the glamour of her charm. He would have dared fire and flood to keep his place at her side, but luckily, with Uncle Dick and Aunt Betty as his social sponsors, he soon found the way open and barriers down.

"Mason, Randolph, my dear sirs," the old soldier would declare to his friends. "The young man's name speaks for him. Of course, the new régime at Rothesay may seem a trifle high-handed, but Lord Earnscliffe—he prefers very properly to drop his title here and be known as Mr. Eveleth—has English ideas of proprietary rights, somewhat different from ours, and as for young Mr. Mason himself, he is one of the

finest young fellows I have ever met, and a great addition to our country society, as I am sure all the ladies agree."

And the ladies did agree unanimously, for Mr. Mason's handsome face and brown eyes were passports to feminine favor that no Southern woman, young or old, could resist.

But though many a fair cheek flushed and hearts pulsed quicker in Master Jack's presence, for he was courteous and charming to all, he had eyes and thought for only one—Marjorie in her gingham dress and pink sunbonnet hunting eggs and picking berries—Marjorie in gypsy hat and flowered muslin loitering in the summer woods—Marjorie in blue riding dress scouring the hills on Uncle Dick's pet pony Dixie—Marjorie a radiant, white-robed vision queening it at dance and garden party. Marjorie, in her every bewitching guise and gown and grace was before him night and day, all other living creatures fading into mere shadows in the glory of her presence.

From the "painted stillness" of Rothesay, Lord Earncliffe watched the spell deepen-

ing on his young kinsman with a silent sympathy that neither jested nor questioned. It had come as he had foreseen, the light, the dream, the glory. It had come to Jack even as in the long ago it had come to him. And as he recalled the radiance whose early darkening had left his life so gloomy and desolate, his lonely heart seemed to fill with a pitying tenderness for this young lover and all its possible perils of loss and woe, with an unselfish longing to shield and guard his boy from mistake or misstep in his dazzling, new-found way.

"You will be home to dinner?" he asked casually as Master Jack emerged booted and spurred for a mountain ride.

"I—I scarcely think so," was the hesitating reply. "The Bartons—they have the next place to Lynnhurst—asked me to a melon feast to-night. You know the Judge—he was one of the old trustees of Rothesay—I think it wise to get on friendly terms with the best people."

"Very wise," answered the older gentleman drily. "Only it seems to me from an old world standpoint there should be

some return made for all this very friendly hospitality that has been extended to you of late."

"Return?" repeated the young man, somewhat startled. "Really, I never thought—that is, it seemed impossible, there being no ladies here to do the honors gracefully. Do you think return is expected?"

"From the master of Rothesay—yes—you should throw open your doors, or at least your grounds, and entertain. And we will do it fittingly. I know," a faint smile flitted over the strong, grave face, "that I have the reputation of being something of a curmudgeon."

"Not at all," interrupted the other hastily. "Simply by preference a recluse. And I would not have you do violence to your taste in this matter for my sake."

"It will be no violence," was the quiet answer. "I would like to show these good people what we have made of Rothesay. We will give them a *fête champêtre*—or, in good plain English, a garden party, so invite whom you please, but especially your little friend of the Mer de Glace."

"Marjorie!—I—I mean Miss Carmichael," said the young man eagerly. "You are very kind, sir. I will ask her, as you say, and—and how many others?"

"Oh, fifty, sixty, as many as you wish; it makes no difference to me. We will have an orchestra, a caterer, everything right. And I am quite old enough to play chaperon. So make the date early and let us be done with it, my boy."

"It will all be a dreadful bore to you, I am sure," said Jack

"Perhaps it will," was the reply. "But still it must be done—we must get abreast of this Virginia hospitality somehow. And—and—I want to hear that little girl's laugh again, Jack—there was a music in it—that—that," he paused as if further speech were too painful.

But the younger man broke in with a lover's eagerness. "Did you notice it, sir? So have I, and her smile, her eyes. It is as if somewhere in some far-off past I had known her, loved her."

Lord Earnscliffe smiled sadly. "A common experience in your state of mind, my

boy—hope and memory alike live in dreams. But I won't detain you. Give out your invitations informally to-night, if you please, and we will do our best to re-establish Rothesay in its olden place in the opinion of our neighbors."

"How about next Thursday, then, sir?" asked the young man. "The moon will be at its full, and—and—the gardens and grove at their best."

"All right, then," was the indulgent answer. "Let it be Thursday and the full of the moon."

And so it happened that the next Thursday evening found the painted stillness of Rothesay wakened into strange festal life, for Master Jack had been most-liberal in his invitations. To the golden opinions he had won for himself was added the natural curiosity of old and young to see the restored Rothesay and its noble master, who had hitherto maintained such unpopular and seemingly haughty reserve. To have the gates of his mountain castle suddenly flung hospitably open sent a thrill of delighted interest through the country.

Gossip was busy with details, in which fact and fiction were bewilderingly intermixed.

Mr. Eveleth, as he wished to be called on republican soil, was given a dozen ranks and titles varying from a prince of the blood exiled for an unhappy love affair to a secret envoy of the British government sent to undermine American industries.

But the most captious of critics could find no fault with the noble welcome accorded the guests that came at Master Jack's bidding to the moonlight festa. Here and there in shaded nooks colored lights gleamed like flaming flowers in the darkness, but the wide, velvety slopes, the terraces, the gardens, were left to the white glamour of the cloudless night. Under the boughs of a kingly oak, where it was said that the last council of the Lost Cause had been held in the darkness more than forty years ago, the master of Rothesay stood to receive his guests, greeting each with a simple, quiet courtesy that disarmed all prejudice.

A stringed orchestra, hired from a famous summer resort thirty miles distant,

played softly behind a screen of oleanders; there was no formal banquet spread, but rustic tables and chairs were set in charming nooks, and deft waiters stood ready to serve dainty refreshments, brought in great wagons over the mountains that morning. Never had princely hospitality been dispensed with more unassuming grace, even the bare, half-furnished house, through which the guests wandered at will, only served to deepen the charmed interest in its new owners. There was a pathetic appeal in the empty rooms, the stately, wainscoted halls.

Rothsay seemed awaiting the magic touch that would give it light and life and love, that would transform it once more into a home. Marjorie and Bernice were to come with a coachful of gay young people, chaperoned by Mrs. Judge Barton, who, having married her own two daughters most successfully, stood ready to extend her experienced assistance to all within her kindly reach. It was Mrs. Judge Barton who insisted that the Paris boxes—which had been consigned to an upper room on Miss Car-

michael's arrival at Lynnhurst—should be opened for this special occasion, and that Marjorie should wear a lovely gown of white and silver made with the subtle simplicity that only the French modiste can attain.

Owing to the untoward delay of stopping at four different homes for her scattered charges, Mrs. Judge Barton was an hour late, and the whole affair was rapidly sinking into a dark and dismal failure in Master Jack's disappointed eyes when the belated chaperon appeared with her pretty flock, and in a moment the young host was delightedly introducing the new arrivals to his cousin, Mr. Eveleth, whose grave, quiet eyes brightened into sudden light and interest as he caught Miss Carmichael's name.

For a moment as Marjorie's sweet young face was lifted to his, the soft hand rested in his own as the girl whom his boy loved stood in all her fresh loveliness before him, the man was conscious of a strange stir in his silent heart, a touch upon tender, fatherly chords that even Jack had never

wakened, a sudden wistful yearning to have this lovely vision to bless and brighten his declining years as Jack's wife.

"It was not the first time Cousin Arthur has seen you," said Jack, who had contrived to detain Marjorie under the great oak while the others passed on.

"Not the first, I must confess," said Lord Earnscliffe, smiling in a way that brightened the grave face most attractively. "I was a momentary spy and eavesdropper at Mrs. Marsden's luncheon about a month ago. I am glad to give more fitting welcome to-night to my involuntary guests. Shall we go a little nearer the music? There is a pleasant seat on the terrace that overlooks the lawn, where the orchestra is heard at its best."

And then Marjorie, who with all the younger guests had come to Rothesay in a wholesome awe of its eccentric master, found herself seated by that gentleman's side on the terrace, strangely at home and at ease, telling him of the lovely time she was having here in the mountains of Lynnhurst and its sweet, old-fashioned charms,

how good Uncle Dick and Aunt Betty and everybody else had been to her, and how this beautiful night at Rothesay had crowned all.

"We really did not expect anything like this," she added simply.

Lord Earnscliffe smiled. It was long since he had listened to girlish chatter with such interest. "We have done our best," he answered, "but it is a bachelor's best, as you see, a poor return for the warm hospitality that has been lavished on Jack."

"And which I owe altogether to Miss Marjorie and her friends at Lynnhurst," interposed Jack. "If they had not smiled upon me I would have been an outcast still."

"Oh, not an outcast," laughed Marjorie. "All the girls in the country were proud to know you before I came."

"But were afraid of the old curmudgeon of an English cousin, who insisted upon bridging their torrents and fencing their breakneck roads," said the older gentleman. "Ah, well, I am going to lift my chilling shadow from Rothesay very soon, and let this young American run it as he wills."

"You are going home?" asked Marjorie.

"To the place I call by that name," was the brief answer.

"Then if it is but a name, why do you not stay here? You have made Rothesay so beautiful only to turn away from it?" she questioned regretfully, and again something in the low, sweet voice, the gentle remembrance of her words, touched that strange new chord in her listener's heart, a chord whose vibration was half joy and half pain.

"I have duties, obligations I can not shirk," he answered. "Besides, I want Jack to marry and settle down, and I am a grim, gloomy old fellow that no pretty young wife would want around."

"Don't put it that way, sir," said Jack with sudden emotion. "Miss Marjorie knows all you have done for me; how you have been friend, father, everything. She will think me a selfish, ungrateful brute."

"Oh, no, I won't," said Marjorie. "I couldn't think anything so dreadful." And then, with an uncomfortable consciousness that she was facing inexpressible things, she

added lightly, "I have a dear dad of my own who is both grim and gloomy sometimes, too. But as my old Scotch uncle says, all the Carmichaels are 'dour.' Even I feel the 'dourness' creeping over me occasionally. Not very often," she laughed, "only when the skies darken, and the storms burst down by the wide, lonely sea. Oh! I don't like the sea, do you?" and again she turned that artless, trusting gaze to her companion, that so strangely stirred his heart.

"No," he answered shortly, almost brusquely, "I do not."

"It is so boundless, so homeless," she continued. "My bad dreams are always of tossing in a lonely boat with only stormy waves in sight and no one to help or save. And though I have crossed the ocean many times, I am always sick with dread until we touch the land. That is why I like it so much here, where the great mountains stand like walls and all is green and safe and sweet."

"Ah, you have not seen one of our mountain storms yet," said Jack gaily. "The thunder crashing like a thousand batteries

in action, and the big oaks snapping like pipe-stems in the wind. There was one last summer."

"Don't tell her of it," hastily interrupted Lord Earncliffe. "Leave her in her peaceful dream-paradise where no storms burst, Jack. But I am keeping you both too long talking to a dull old man when all the young people are busy with the ices and bonbons. So do your duty to this fair lady, Jack, while I slip off for a smoke on the porch."

"We will see you again, sir," said Jack as his cousin rose to turn away. "Not to-night," was the answer, and the voice was almost harsh in its brusque decision, as without further ceremony the speaker strode away up the shaded path to the house.

"Oh, I must have offended him," said Marjorie remorsefully. "It is as Sister Angela warned me. I talk too much."

"Not at all—not at all," declared Jack earnestly. "You were simply bewitching. I have never seen him so attracted, so charmed. He will tell me so to-night, I am sure, when you are gone. Come down to

that little table under the sycamore and let me get you an ice."

She went with him silently. All around them was soft chatter and laughter, while the waiters hurried to and fro with drinking-glasses and trays of dainty ices and everything that makes a lavish summer feast.

Threading all this pleasant murmur came the sweet, plaintive strains of a Hungarian waltz from the hidden orchestra. But the moonlight falling through the boughs of the old sycamore showed Marjorie's soft eyes filled with tears. "Oh, I hurt him, I know," she said regretfully to the dismayed Jack. "And he is so good, so noble, so lonely. I never felt so sorry for any one before, but my foolish prattle touched some sore place in his heart."

"Don't distress yourself," pleaded Jack, who found it hard to speak calmly under the gaze of those tearful eyes. "He often has these moods, especially when anything recalls the great sorrow of his life, like your childish dreams of the sea. His young wife died from the shock and exposure of a ship-

wreck many years ago. He has never recovered from it. He had an attack of brain fever afterward, and it was thought for weeks he would die. But he lived, as you see, broken in heart and spirit, but one of the best, truest, and noblest of men."

"It is his wife's picture that hangs over the hearth in your living-room," said Marjorie eagerly. "Can I see it again to-night?"

"Certainly, if you wish," was his answer, "but here come the ices. Won't you try one first, and forget the sad story you have drawn from me? I had hoped to make this such a happy night."

"Oh, it is, it is," she said in a low, tremulous voice, "happy and yet—yet—sad. Let some one else take the ices, we will have ours later. Come, show me the picture now," and she rose with the pretty, appealing grace that no lover could withstand. He led her through sweet moonlit ways to the house, whose barren splendors had been deserted by the most curious for the gay attraction in grove and garden without.

Together they stood in the lamp-lit living-room and Marjorie looked up with fascinated eyes to the sweet pictured face above the hearth.

"Oh, how lovely she must have been," she murmured in a low voice.

"She was," answered Jack. "I remember, though I was only a little boy when she died."

"And the motto around the frame—I can not see it very well?" she asked.

"It has been on the shield of the Eveleths for centuries," replied her companion. "*Non nobis solum.*"

"That means 'not for ourselves alone,'" Marjorie said softly. "That is beautiful, too."

"But sternly impossible to-night," said Jack. At the sight of the lovely white-robed figure standing in his hearth he flung aside all reserve and restraint and burst into the ardent, manly avowal that had been trembling on his lips all evening. "I see, I think of, live only for you. Marjorie, Marjorie, this is no light, passing fancy. I have dreamed of you, loved you, longed to find

you again since that first day we met on the Mer de Glace. And this summer, this wonderful, magical summer, has made me all your own." Much more Master Jack said, pleading with all his honest soul in his brown eyes, his deep, manly tone, while Marjorie listened, the soft flush deepening on her cheek, her heart fluttering with a new joy, new fear. Love avowals were no novelties to her this summer. Already during her brief weeks of bellehood half a dozen sighing swains had laid their youthful hearts and somewhat uncertain fortunes at her feet.

But—but this was altogether different. She could find no gay, coquettish answer to toss back here, no laughing jest to turn aside all serious thought. And if she could, would she turn aside Master Jack?

How utterly tame, blank, unsupportable the days would seem without the light of those brown eyes flashing upon her pathway, the music of that voice in her ear. And yet—and yet "One little word, beloved, one little word, if not of love, of hope."

"Oh, not yet, not yet," she whispered, feeling with sudden fright all that word would mean. "I can not answer you as I did the others. It is such a solemn thing, this love you ask that I would give. I must have time to think," her voice faltered, "to pray."

"How long must you think and pray, darling?" he asked.

She hesitated. Ah, he was an unbeliever, this poor Master Jack. He would not understand the sweet ways of Saint Cecile; he knew nothing about the guidance and grace one must ask before such a mighty decision as this.

"How long, beloved?" he asked again, and the light of hope was in his eyes now.

"One day, two—perhaps nine," she answered. "Full nine days, sir," and she found courage to glance up into his pleading eyes with the old roguish defiance.

"Nine days," he echoed woefully. "Nine days of suspense. Why, sweetheart, that is an eternity. But still," something in the sweet gravity that stole again over her face

made him add, "It shall be as you wish. You shall have all the time you ask."

"Oh, Jack, yes," she said softly; "give me time, for what are nine days or nine years to the love and life that must last forever and forever."

CHAPTER XIII

A NOVENA

YOU will marry him, of course. I felt it from the first," said wise Bernice, as clasped in her friend's arms that night Marjorie made a shy, sweet confession.

"And what is the use of making a novena when everything is settled, Marjorie, as you well know?"

"Oh, Bernice, I do not know; I do not know," was the tremulous answer.

"I do," said Bernice calmly; "so does Aunt Betty; so does Uncle Dick; so does everybody. It was a plain vocation from the first, for he has no prejudices and adores you so that you can lead him where you please. And he will be in the Church within a year." But good Aunt Betty in her ripper wisdom understood the fears and flutters of the young heart.

"You do right to pray, my dear," she said with a little sigh; "and there is no better time than the present, for Father Bowling

is coming next week to say Mass for us. I have the little altar from my old home hidden away in the west wing. There has been small use for it these long, long years, as God knows. Father Bowling comes once in a while, but there's neither priest nor church within fifty miles, and it has been a heavy sorrow to me, this living so far from God's grace and God's help, my dear. And the thought has come to me of late that maybe you have been sent to bring His light and blessing to the Ridge."

"I, a foolish girl like me! Aunt Betty; oh, no, no, no," disclaimed Marjorie.

"Why not, my dear, why not? You have youth and beauty and wealth, and the power to charm and hold—all gifts that can be of great good as well as great harm. So let us pray for God's guidance, that never fails when we ask for it in faith and trust."

And with such sweet words of hope and cheer, Marjorie's young heart opened to its new joy, like a flower to the sun. Master Jack, chafing impatiently at delay, little dreamed that his love could have no greater surety than it gained in these days that Mar-

jorie had asked to "think and pray." In the dark hours that were to come she looked back on this "girlish" novena as a lovely stretch in her life path which no after sorrows could cloud. Every evening she stole into the old west wing and, kneeling before the little altar that Aunt Betty had already decorated with the time-worn lace and linen, the silver candlesticks and tall, white tapers, guarded carefully from year to year as women guard their holiest treasures, Marjorie whispered her tender pleadings for guidance and grace.

And to the simple, unspoiled child of Saint Cecile the answer seemed to come in the new thoughts and hopes that every day grew brighter and sweeter until the future opening before her almost dazzled her with its radiant light. Ah! it was to this, to this wonderful, rainbow-arched height, that all her young life had tended; it was to this beautiful goal she had been gently led, father, mother, grandmother, Papa Perot, Bernice, all unconsciously had helped to guide her on her way. Dunvallon, Saint Cecile, the blessed Mer de Glace, Clum

Creek, Rothesay, Lynnhurst, marked the happy turns of the road that she seemed treading now with winged feet, the road that led to Jack. It had all been decreed by a kind Heaven from the first, Marjorie felt, as distracting thoughts of the brown eyes and the eager voice and the tender smile mingled with the Aves of her novena.

True, Jack was not a Catholic, but she would make him one, as Bernice said, and oh, what a lovely home she would have at Rothesay, and how she would pet and comfort the lonely, broken-hearted old man, who would stay there forever with her and Jack.

Then Marjorie would quite forget the count of her Glorias and have to begin them again to make the novena complete. But the sweet, simple faith was there intact, and no doubt the tender saints looked pityingly through the mists of this vale of tears on that evanescent bloom, a girl's first love dream.

Master Jack did his best to contribute to Marjorie's distractions, we must confess. Every night found him at Lynnhurst, and

though forbidden to plead his cause by word of mouth, his submissive silence was in itself eloquence.

For Bernice, like the good comrade she was, had been frankly explanatory. "Don't worry, it will be all right. Marjorie is making a novena before she gives you an answer."

"A novena!" echoed Master Jack wonderingly; "and what is that?"

"Oh, a novena—a novena is a nine days' prayer. And when one is in sorrow, or trouble, or want, or doubt——"

"I see, I see," said Master Jack thoughtfully. "Nine days' prayer would clinch most anything. I am afraid I won't stand the pressure, Miss Bernice."

"Oh, yes you will," said Bernice encouragingly.

"Do you think so?" he asked eagerly; "do you really think so, Miss Bernice? I love her so much." And the pleasant brown eyes shone with a light that made Bernice's little wood-flower heart flutter sympathetically. "It seems as if I had always loved her, as if it were impossible that we had ever been

strangers, as if every turn of her lovely head, every sound of her voice belonged to some dim, far, long ago. You don't believe in pre-existence, Miss Bernice?"

"No," answered Bernice decidedly, "and I hope you don't either," she added in anxious alarm for Marjorie's expected convert. "It is heathenish and unchristian, as Sister Angela always told us, and Marjorie wouldn't like you to have any such fancies about her, I know, when she is praying that you may believe and hope as she does now."

"Oh, she is praying for that, is she?" said Master Jack, who had learned that the ways of Saint Cecile were mysterious and bewildering as the orbits of the stars.

"It would make everything so much safer and happier," continued Bernice.

"Safer, happier," protested Master Jack. "Really, I can't see why."

"No, you can't; that's the trouble," said Bernice with her little decided nod. "And it would take the whole catechism to teach you why."

"I know the Church catechism," answered Master Jack with an uneasy feeling

that in the "orbits of the stars" he was on trial, "and I've been a fairish sort of chap, as fellows go. And as for being safe and happy," the eager young voice trembled, "I would die this moment to save Marjorie from any grief or harm."

"Oh, I am sure you would," said Bernice with another little comprehending nod. "Still, you don't—you can't understand." And the hopeless sigh that seemed to flutter over some chasm of separation haunted Master Jack as he took his way homeward that evening through the summer twilight, unwilling to intrude longer, for Father Bowling was coming to begin his station at Lynnhurst that night, and there was a gentle stir of reverent preparation in which he felt he had no place or part.

The few Catholics, white and black, within reach had been notified of the Mass on the morrow. The hospitable breakfast for all who would attend demanded Aunt Betty's consideration. Uncle Dick stood at command, like the gallant old soldier he was.

"I gave my word to respect my wife's re-

ligion, sir," he explained to Jack, "and I will keep it to the end. Zach, you old sinner, get out one of those bottles of Madeira you hid from the Yankees. Father Bowling is a gentleman and a scholar, and we must treat him to our best."

But riding off through the gathering twilight, Master Jack was conscious of some strange discordance between Uncle Dick's bluff welcome to the "gentleman and scholar" and the reverent hush that seemed to pervade Lynnhurst to-night. Was it that neither he nor Uncle Dick could understand?

Surely, never were creatures freer from the boasted complexity of the modern woman than Marjorie, Bernice, and good, simple Aunt Betty.

The cults, philosophies, "isms," of these restless, questioning days were mere names to them, the problems that vex the roving truth-seeker all unknown. Yet more than once in this past month, when Tom Barton or Peyton Leigh, with the levity of the callow collegian, had ventured a skeptical word or jest, the white banners of Saint

Cecile that had fluttered to the defense had been held in no uncertain grasp, for these clear-eyed girls knew whereof they spoke and why.

A true lover's tender reverence had always blended with his thoughts of Marjorie, but as he took his way this evening over the heights, whose tortuous paths had become familiar ground, that reverence seemed to grow into something higher and holier. It was as if she were calling, leading him into strange, beautiful ways of which hitherto he had no ken.

Slowly he rode homeward. Pasha's rein dropped idly on his neck, while his rider dreamed and wondered and hoped, the breath of summer night about him, the starry sky of the summer night arching his happy way.

To-morrow Marjorie was to give him his answer—to-morrow her sweet lips would speak the word he had already read in her tender eyes; to-morrow she would lay her hand in his, the soft little hand that henceforth should lead him where she willed, even to the orbits of the stars. And there

would be no long, tedious engagement; why should love delay when all its bright, sunlit ways lay open and unbarred? Rothesay stood in silent splendor waiting for her coming, her touch. The great rooms would blossom forth into beauty, the great halls waken into music and life. In what sweet, gracious state she would reign there as lady and queen. Absorbed in his blissful dreams, Master Jack took the last lap of his road almost unconsciously and was quite startled to find Pasha at the stone gateway of Rothesay, so brief had seemed his love-lit way. Lord Earnscliffe was pacing the pillared portico, as he often did for half the night, a restless, silent shadow among the shadows. But he had always pleasant greeting for the young lover, however late his return.

"You are back early this evening," he said as Jack drew rein at the steps and the keen eyes sought anxiously for some sign of discomfiture.

But the young man leaped lightly to the ground, gave a word of dismissal to Pasha, who cantered off obediently to his stable,

while his master sprang up on the portico with the bounding step that tells of a joyous heart.

"An hour or two, I believe," he answered. "The fact is, I felt a little in the way. There is some religious service on hand for to-morrow, and the ladies were all busy with preparation. Mrs. Brooke is a Catholic, the old Maryland stock that came over with Lord Baltimore. And the young ladies are of the same Faith, and besides, being just out of a convent school, are most devout."

"So the atmosphere was not altogether congenial to-night," said the older gentleman a little dryly, as he sank into a chair and lit his cigar.

"Oh, I can't say that," was the hasty reply. "On the contrary, it gave me a sort of uplift. There is such a wonderful earnestness about the Romish church."

"Don't—don't call it *that*," said Lord Earnscliffe with sudden harshness. "Say Roman Catholic if you must particularize about the one great Church that has stood the test of the ages, unchanging and unchanged. I am no believer—no Christian,

as you know, but I am not blind to historic facts. And this Church, *the* Church of old and new Christendom, is a stupendous fact. Have you ever thought of it in that way?"

"Well, nò," admitted the young man. "Of course, I have seen its picturesque side in my travels. It seemed to me a sort of medieval survival."

"A medieval survival," Lord Earnscliffe laughed grimly, "with its schools, its churches, its monasteries springing up around us on every side, its mighty barriers standing alone, intact against the flood of divorce that threatens home and fireside, its voice rising clear and strong above the babel of modern cults. My boy, don't shut your eyes to the situation. If you marry a Catholic woman loyal to her Faith, you will find this 'medieval survival' a living force facing you at every turn of your life."

"I am willing," answered the young man gravely, "with the woman I love, sir. I feel that force could only lead me upward. I am just beginning to realize that there are paths higher than I have ever trodden, paths that reach beyond the stars."

"And you are ready to follow her *there*?"

The questioner fixed his keen eyes on the young lover, as if the last words had stirred some new sympathy he could not speak.

"Yes," answered the clear young voice fearlessly, "at any cost."

"Ah, my boy, my boy," Lord Earnscliffe rose and stood for a moment behind Jack's chair, his hand resting tenderly on the young man's shoulder. "Those paths to the stars are hard climbing, Jack. Heaven grant you may not be taken at your word."

The Gap and Valley were flooded with sunset glory next evening when Jack took his way over the mountains to Lynnhurst. The west was a splendor of gold and rose and purple, while trembling in the opaline radiance gleamed one pure, pale, starlike beam from some far-off world lost in the light and beauty of this. The old home in the valley, flashing back the sunset glow from its quaint, diamond-paned windows, seemed illumined for some joyous feast. Eagerly, Master Jack hurried in his happy way down the sharp spur of the mountains,

along the grass-grown lane that skirted the daisied fields, through the old gate that swung hospitably open at his touch, past the low graves under the lindens, where "ole missus" slept in peace beside her boy.

There was a group upon the porch—Uncle Dick, Aunt Betty, two or three visitors whom he had never met, a tall, grave man in a Roman collar—Father Bowling, no doubt—still lingering with his old friends, an honored guest, Bernice talking to Peyton Leigh. But Marjorie—the brown eyes of Master Jack swept the sunset scene with a lover's impatient glance. Where was Marjorie? Hiding, perhaps, in her shy, sweet maiden pride, that he might come and find her, hiding that their meeting should escape even friendly glance and smile, under oaks, perhaps, beside the house, or beneath the falling trellis of the grape arbor, or where the box-bordered garden paths met and a tangle of sweet syringa arched into a bower of fragrant bloom. It was hard to stop at the porch for civil and courteous greeting, so impatient was he to be off on his quest for his lady and love.

But stop he must, for his approach had been noted, and there was a general stir of welcome as he drew near.

"We have been looking for you," said Uncle Dick heartily. "Father Bowling, this is Mr. Jack Randolph Mason, our new neighbor at Rothesay, and the rising light of the country—old Randolph stock, sir, that is bound to tell."

Father Bowling shook hands cordially; half a dozen introductions followed in the light, friendly conversation. Master Jack bore his part, he knew not how, until he reached Bernice's side.

"Marjorie?" he asked in a low, eager voice. "Where is she?"

"Oh, haven't you heard?" she said, lifting her soft eyes of sympathy; "she has gone——"

"Gone—where—when—how?" was the tempestuous question.

"Home to her father," answered Bernice sadly. "He has had a stroke of some kind. The news came like a thunderbolt upon her this morning when she—we all were so happy. The messenger, her father's

private secretary, arrived just after Mass. He had ordered relays of horses to the station, where a special train was waiting for them. It was all a wild rush at any cost to see her father alive—a race with death. He is at Dunvallon, their seaside home.”

It was a desperately disappointed young lover that rode back over heights blackening with the rising storm to the shelter of Rothesay.

“Dunvallon!” echoed Lord Earnscliffe when he heard the day’s happenings. “Dunvallon! Carmichael of Dunvallon!” He put his hand to his head, as if striving to awaken some sleeping thought. “Carmichael of *Dunvallon*! Where have I heard that name before?”

CHAPTER XIV

A HOMECOMING

IT HAD been a swift homeward flight, indeed, for Marjorie, a race with death, as Bernice had said. From the moment that Mr. Verrill, pale, nervous and hurried, had appeared at Lynnhurst, the rapid journey had seemed to her like a troubled fever dream, even though the magic wand of gold had conquered all difficulties.

Two relays of strong horses had shortened the long passage over the Ridge, a Pullman "special," whose splendor was the amazement of the honest major, awaited them at Hillton Station. With the right of way claimed in the name of the president of the road, who was a personal friend of Mr. Carmichael, the special swept on at dizzy speed over the heights and through the soft depths of greenery that had been the opening gates of a new Paradise to Marjorie two brief months ago.

Like one dulled by a sudden blow, she heard all Mr. Verrill could tell. Her father, who had spent all the summer at Dunvallon, had been stricken suddenly two nights ago. Doctor Perot was in attendance on him, a brief telegram to the office had announced his serious illness and ordered Mr. Verrill to proceed at once to Lynnhurst and bring Miss Carmichael home at the greatest possible haste. What this haste portended Marjorie understood without being told. Her father was dying, her kind, good, generous if somewhat stern father, the father whom she had almost forgotten in the new sweetness of her summer dream. Her father! Ah, she had not loved him enough. She felt remorsefully his sad, serious manner had been a check to her girlish spirits. She had never been the joy and blessing she should have been; always there had been something between them, some strange shadow that she could not understand. She had never seen his grave eyes brighten for her as she had seen Jack's, Uncle Dick's, even Lord Earncliffe's.

It was all her fault, she said again and again to herself; and now he was dying, going from her forever and she could not atone. And so with tears dimming the flying landscape Marjorie was borne on until in the fading light of the same day that had brought Master Jack, eager for his promised answer, to Lynnhurst, she was swept into the roar and tumult of the great city. A telegram was waiting the special's arrival. Mr. Verrill tore it open with nervous haste, his face clearing as he read, "Still living; hurry on."

And then Marjorie was lifted into a great touring car, and was speeding on over the mighty bridges that spanned the river harbors, through busy outlying towns and villages and stretches of parks and groves that marked splendid country homes. Nearer, ever nearer, to the dreaded end of the journey, where death waited by the barren sands, the darkening seas.

The day had ended in sullen, murky gloom, and as the night came on the clouds blackening over the starless sky muttered ominously of gathering storm, while closer

and louder sounded the heavy boom of the waves, rising in fierce strength on the ever-growing desolation of the shore. And now the ghostly shadow of the sand-dunes rose beside the road, the mist veil thickened, the red lights of the motor car flashed upon the stone pillars of a gateway, under the dark line of sentinel cedars the gray walls of Dunvallon rose dimly in the gloom. Marjorie was at home.

With a creaking of heavy bolts and locks, the wide doors swung open, the great arched, oak-ribbed hall stood revealed in a glare of light, but there was only Davy, the old Scotch butler, who had been factotum at Dunvallon for years, to give the daughter of the house welcome, "dour" old Davy, who faced all happenings of good or ill with the same silent, stony calm.

"Oh, Davy, Davy," sobbed Marjorie, "father, my poor father, how is he?"

"Sair bad," was the grim answer. The burr of the thistle still clung to Davy's speech. "He'll not ken ye, I'm thinkin'. Ye mon go in yon and wait till the auld doctor bids ye come." He opened the door

of the living-room where Donald Carmichael had watched and waited eighteen years ago. Marjorie entered, while Mr. Verrill, nervous and doubtful, seated himself in the hall without, waiting for further orders.

Sinking back in the great cushioned chair by the center table, the trembling girl looked about her at the home she had not seen for years. There was no lack of luxury in its silence and gloom. Silken hangings, Persian rugs, richly cushioned divans, gave the wide room an air of splendid comfort. The light of a tall lamp fell softly through a shade of jeweled glass, the log fire, needed always here in the chill of the night damps, burned brightly on the hearth.

Yet with all that a chill seemed to sink deep into Marjorie's heart and soul. She thought of the warm sweetness of Lynnhurst, the loving welcome that had met her on its threshold, the blessed home light that burned in its half-ruined walls, and shivered like a new-blown rose at the north wind's breath. She closed her eyes to keep

back the tears and then suddenly there was a footfall beside her—an old familiar voice spoke her name and she sprang to her feet and flung her arms about the neck of Papa Perot in a wild outburst of grief that she could no longer repress.

"Pauvre petite, pauvre petite," said the old man soothingly. "It is a sad ending for the glad summer flight—a sad, dark end. But we must be brave, we must be strong, *ma filleule*. It is the lesson we learned at Saint Cecile, is it not so? Brave and strong though the skies darken and the storm bursts. The sun is ever shining beyond."

"Oh, Papa Perot, dear Papa Perot." And Marjorie clung to the old man as if it were her last hold on earth. "My heart is breaking. Father, my own dear father, tell me of him, tell me all. And Mama, poor little Mama. Oh, this will kill her, too, I know. Oh, let me go to her, if I can not see him, let me go take her in my arms and love and comfort and help her, poor little Mama, poor little Mama."

The old face bent tenderly over the sobbing girl grew suddenly rigid and tense.

"No, no, no, no," was the hurried reply. "*La petite maman* is too ill, too ill; you can not see her yet. It is the poor Papa who sent for you, *ma filleule*, who would see you, speak to you, before—ah, *ma filleule*, *ma filleule*." The speaker's voice broke. "I would save you, spare you, if I could; but it is too late, too late."

"He is not—not dead!" gasped Marjorie.

"No, no," the old man answered, "not yet. But I am an old doctor, *ma filleule*, an old surgeon. Pierre Perot stood second to none in Paris a year ago. There were men who would give thousands of francs for my word, my touch, and when I say, *ma filleule*, there is no hope—but I forget." The speaker broke off with sudden nervousness. "The gentleman who came with you, where is he?"

"Waiting in the hall," answered Marjorie. "And there is a storm coming on. Should we not ask him—keep him here for the night?"

"No, no, no," was again the quick answer. "He must go; there is no room. He can reach Brentwood in half an hour. I

will tell him as courteously as I can there is no room for him here to-night." And while Marjorie, who knew the resources of Dunvallon, stood wondering, Papa Perot hurried into the hall, where he had brief speech with Mr. Verrill, and in a few moments the great outer door swung open again and the chug of the starting motor told that the nervous and somewhat bewildered gentleman had taken his leave.

What was it, Marjorie thought with a sudden flash of intuition? What was it that Mr. Verrill must not hear or see or know? What was the meaning of this strange hush in which stricken heart made no sign or moan? What was this awful shadow that seemed to crush every one into fear and silence? Some icy terror seemed to stalk in the house more pitiless than death. Marjorie had known only the holy passings of Saint Cecile, the gleam of blessed tapers, the sound of the sacred chant, the toll of the parting bell, the sweet, solemn peace, half grief and half triumph, that seemed to fall like a benediction when some dear, sainted soul went forth to her reward. But death

at Saint Cecile was but the open gate to heaven. It was never, never like this.

Sick with suspense, she waited the old man's return, the good old man who had been her wise, tender, watchful friend ever since she could remember. But even Papa Perot's keen old face looked gray and hopeless to-night; his strength seemed to have failed. All the weight of the years he had hitherto borne so lightly lay upon him as with a slow, feeble step he re-entered the room and, taking Marjorie's hand, drew her to a seat on the divan beside him. Without the storm was rising, the wind moaned under the cedars, a sudden gust lifted the silken draperies of the window before them, showing iron bars beyond—bars thick and heavy as those of a jail.

"We must talk a little, *ma filleule*, before we go up to see the poor Papa," began Marjorie's old friend, his voice shaking a little despite his efforts at cheer. "He has no strength, no voice to speak; it is for me to tell you, *ma filleule*, what I have wished, hoped—aye, prayed that you need never know. *Ma pauvre petite*, have you never

felt that there was some shadow upon your young life, some sorrow in your home, that you did not see?"

"Yes," said Marjorie, and it was as if some inner self voiced the answer, some wise, sad self that was rousing into painful, bewildering life. "I—I have felt it, yes."

"For it is there," continued the old man, "a shadow that neither wealth nor love could lift or lighten, *ma filleule*."

"Mama," cried Marjorie sharply, and the lovely eyes fixed upon Papa Perot seemed to widen and darken as a thousand vague, broken, half-formed memories struggled out of the mists of forgetfulness. "It is something about Mama."

"This poor *petite papillon* of a Mama, yes, *ma filleule*. On all of her blood, her race, there has rested for long years a dark, terrible doom. She does not know, she has been kept in ignorance of it. When the strange, wild spells, in which she is not herself, come upon her she loses, ah, *ma filleule*, this *pauvre petit papillon* loses all things—memory, reason, even, *ma filleule*, even love itself."

"Yes," said Marjorie, with a long-drawn breath, and into the soft eyes fixed upon the old speaker there came the look of a lamb beneath the uplifted knife, "you mean—you mean—oh, little Mama, poor little Mama."

"Ah, it is poor little Mama, indeed, *ma filleule*," continued the old man brokenly, "but she has been shielded, watched, guarded by loving care, even from the knowledge of her doom. It is on another the curse has fallen with crushing weight, another who has seen, known, felt it all. Ah, *ma filleule*, that brave father, so true, so faithful, so strong—what he has suffered you will never know. For every year she has grown worse, this poor little *maman*. Such is the doom—every year the shadow deepens, widens, the light lessens; the poor brain clouds more and more. All this summer she has been at her worst."

"All this summer!" some mocking spirit seemed to echo in Marjorie's ear. All this summer, while she had been dreaming of joy and hope and love. All this summer! Dumb, breathless, but with growing com-

prehension in the questioning eyes fixed upon Papa Perot, she listened to the trembling old voice as it continued:

"Your father brought her here, as he has done for years, when her wild, strange spells came on her. Usually old Dave, Tante Lise, her mother, could watch, care for, control her, as they would control a spoiled, wayward, unreasoning child. But this summer your father dared not leave her. She needed, this poor little *maman*, all his wisdom, his patience, his strength. Never could he subject her to the grasp or gaze of strangers, and so he in his self-forgetting, self-sacrificing love remained here to watch, to guard her. In her strange frenzy she turned against him. Two nights ago, *ma filleule*, she stole to his bedside and in her blindness, her darkness——"

A sharp cry from Marjorie stopped the speaker. "Oh, do not say it, Papa Perot, do not say she, she hurt him. Oh, no, no, no! She is too weak, too little; she loved him too well."

"Ah, *ma pauvre petite*, it is those they love best that they hurt. Where she found

it we can not tell, an old rusted stiletto that must have been left forgotten in the house by some previous tenant. He struggled to take it from her and in her mad strength she struck a death-blow."

"Oh, my God, my God!" cried the hapless girl as she slipped from Papa Perot's side to her knees, burying her face, like a stricken creature, in the cushions of the divan. Oh! This was what it all meant, the awful hush and gloom and horror that filled the house. This was what Mr. Verrill must not see or hear or guess; this was the nameless terror that stalked the darkness; this—this——

She was dully conscious of the kind, trembling old hand stroking her bowed head, of the kind old voice sounding thin and afar off in her ear.

"Ah, you must remember, *ma filleule*, that this poor, frenzied little Mama did not know; she did not know. So he feels, he understands, he pities, he loves her still. And he would hide, hush it all. He would guard her from curious eyes, busy tongues, from the world-wide clamor that would rise

if the truth were told. For her sake, for yours, *ma filleule*, none must hear or know. In these weeks that we have been here together, I, old sinner that I am, stray sheep wandering in the darkness, have shown him something of the light that shines beyond the shadows of earth, the hope that leads beyond the gloom. Last night it must have been your innocent prayers, not my weak words, *ma petite*, that moved him. He asked for a priest. Old Father Anselm, who baptized you, came to him, was with him for hours. It is as if the long years of fear and suffering had won him strange grace and blessing at last, for he is calm and at peace. But at every waking, at every conscious moment, his call has been for you. He must see you, speak to you before he dies. So now we must go to him, for the time is short. You will be brave, you will be strong, *ma filleule*, for tears and cries would only disturb his peace."

"Oh, I—I will try," said Marjorie, choking back her sobs as Papa Perot took her icy hand in his and led her gently from the room, out into the great arched hall, where

dour old Davy sat silent and watchful, up the broad, shadowy stairway. The dull despair that mercifully deadens the anguish of such moments had fallen upon Marjorie. She felt like one roaming through the changing phases of some dreadful dream. Though all things were unreal, she was vividly conscious of every detail, the flicker of the lamp that swung by silver chains on the staircase landing, the wild beat of the rain on the oriel window, the moan of the wind through the cedars, the hoarse thunder of the surf as it broke over reef and shore. Then there was a close, heavy odor of antiseptics and Papa Perot was leading Marjorie into a hushed, shadowy room, where old Tante Lise sat withered and grizzled indeed, but her sunken eyes keen and glittering as they were of yore, in their anxious watch.

"Most gone," she whispered to the old man. "Can't do nothin' mo' for him. He most gone."

"Oh, Tante Lise, Tante Lise." Marjorie stretched out appealing hands to her old nurse.

"Don't ketch on to me, chile." The old woman seemed to shrink away with sudden fear. "Don't hold out yo' hand to me. I can't do nothin'; I can't say nothin'. Old Lise got to stan' by, stan' by to de las', stan' by her chile. Dar's yo' father axin' for yo', yo' father." Aunt Lise pointed a shaking hand at the bed. "Yo' hear? Yo' *father* what's dyin'."

"Marjorie," came a sharp, faint call through the shadows. "Is it Marjorie at last?"

"Oh, Father! dear, dear Father, yes, yes." And all the dullness and torpor swept away in a great flood of love and tenderness. Marjorie fell on her knees beside the bed, where gaunt and still, the solemn dignity of death already settling on his ashen face, Donald Carmichael lay in the strange calm of one who, after long struggle and darkness, has found unlooked-for haven. "I am here, dear, dear Father, to do all that you ask, you wish."

"Marjorie, child, daughter, you have heard, you know." The words came hoarsely, brokenly.

"Yes, yes," was the sobbing answer. "Dear Father, I know all."

"Your mother, your poor mother, shield her. Be good to her." He paused, gasping for breath.

"Oh, I will, I will always, always," murmured Marjorie.

"It—it is not her fault, not her fault," he panted. "She—she, my wife, your mother, Marjorie, did not know. But you—you"—there was a hoarse gasp for breath—"poor child, you know that—that you must never love, never marry, Marjorie, lest—lest your mother's, your mother's doom—" Again he paused, struggling for speech.

"*Mon ami*," it was Doctor Perot's kind, pitying voice that interposed, "be at peace; she understands, she understands."

The glazing eyes turned on Marjorie, the icy hand fell feebly upon her bowed head. It was Donald Carmichael's first and last blessing. A silence fell, broken only by labored breathing, then a low wail from Tante Lise told that the Master of Dunvallon was gone.

CHAPTER XV

IN THE DARKNESS

HOW the long, dark hours that followed passed Marjorie never knew. It seemed that her own young life had gone out of her with her father's last gasping breath, his last dying prayer. In all her horror and anguish at Papa Perot's revelation there had been no thought or fear for self. Now, as if by some rending flash in the darkness, she saw the clouds gathering hopelessly over her own life in all their blackness of fear, of doom.

Some one, was it Papa Perot or Tante Lise, lifted her gently from her father's side, led her into the room that had once been her own, the room where she had dreamed and waked and feared and wept in the childish long ago—dreamed and feared, indeed, but of no such horror as this that gripped her to-night. For now, indeed, she understood, she *knew*. The doom was on all of her

mother's blood race, and was on *her*—on her. Oh, how blind she had been to the pity in Papa Perot's eyes, how dull to the meaning of his words! The doom was on her, too, on her—Marjorie Carmichael, on her, too, the darkness would gather, the shadow fall, she would grow wayward, restless, strange. She would have to be watched, guarded, and she thought with a chill of the silken-veiled window, prisoned, barred. She, too, might strike out—strike out against the hand that held—the heart that loved her.

Oh, no, no, never that, for there could be no love. In all the long, dark, bitter years there must be no love. No love to watch, to suffer, to die under her doom.

Without, the storm raged in fierce fury. The wind shrieked, the rain fell in tempestuous torrents, the waves thundered far up on the sand-dunes. But prone upon her face in the darkness Marjorie was only dimly conscious of the battling elements. A fiercer and more deadly storm was sweeping over her wakened woman's soul, shaking every sweet, sure foundation upon which

her young life had been reared. Visions of the past summer rose before her, mocking her dull despair, Lynnhurst, Rothesay, the Gypsy Spring, the rose-wreathed porch, the shadowy lindens. Ah, there was no light left in them now, all had blackened alike in the hopeless gloom. For her there could be no more joy, no hope, no love. And as the thought of the winsome brown eyes, the pleading voice, the outstretched hand, from which she must turn forever, the pang that rent Marjorie's heart seemed more than she could bear.

"Oh, if I could die—if I could die!" she cried aloud in her agony, "for I can not live in this darkness, I can not live without help or hope, without light or love. I can not live—I can not live!"

And then, whether it was a dream or a vision, the stricken girl could not tell. But a picture flashed before her tortured brain—the altar window of Saint Cecile—the window to which she had fled in her childish terrors—the window whose golden light never failed in the blackest storm. And framed in its radiance the Form Divine

with thorn-crowned head, with wounded feet, with bleeding hands outstretched in love and blessing. Ah, the sweet lessons of Saint Cecile did not fail Marjorie in her hour of trial. She slipped down upon her knees beside the bed and burst into a flood of Heaven-sent tears—tears that swept away all the bitterness, the despair, the revolt. For those who knelt with eyes of faith before the altar window, help and hope, light and love, could never fail.

Another was keeping tortured vigil in Dunvallon to-night. A white-haired, haggard woman was watching beside the bed where, exhausted by her paroxysm of frenzy, Vera Carmichael had been sleeping for hours. In the long, dreadful weeks that had culminated in such horror, Valerie Marchand had known something of the torments of a lost soul. Never before had her hapless daughter's spell been so long, so violent, so unbroken, never before had she been utterly beyond all guidance, all control. And now the end had come, the awful, unlooked-for end. Donald Carmichael, strong, faithful, watchful, true lover and

husband to the last, lay dead by his wife's desperate hand.

The proud, hard strength that had sustained Valerie Marchand all these years in her fierce defense of her child, that had steeled her against all pity and remorse, was shaken to-night. The thought of that white, still figure downstairs filled her with infinite dread. She had not slept for two days and nights, and even her iron nerves began to feel the strain.

When Tante Lise, stealing into the room with her catlike tread, suddenly stood beside her, she almost shrieked aloud at the startled leap of her heart. The old woman spoke in the soothing tone, with the same pleading words of the long ago. "Go to bed, Miss Val, go to bed; yo'se clean done out. Lemme watch hyah."

"Oh, I can't, I can't leave her," was the answer. "I could not sleep, Tante Lise. Look at her, Tante Lise, how calm, how still she is. She has been resting like this for hours. Oh, if we can keep her still, perhaps—perhaps——"

Tante Lise bent over the bed to look, to

listen. The golden hair threaded with silver rippled still in rich luxuriance over the pillows. A soft flush was on the thin cheeks; the lips wore their old girlish smile. One white, rounded arm, cut in that last frenzied struggle, lay swathed in bandages without the counterpane; otherwise Vera Carmichael seemed sleeping like a happy child.

"It's a-passin'," said Tante Lise, lifting her old withered face; "de shadder is a-passin'. She'll wake up quiet as a lamb. What yo' gwine to tell her den, Miss Val?"

"Not the truth, my God! no; never, never the truth," was the passionate answer.

"No," said Tante Lise, "never de troof. It's good yo' an' me ain't prayin' Christians. Miss Val, Miss Marjorie she dun come," continued the old woman after a pause. "Yo' know she come, Miss Val?"

"Yes." The face that had quivered into passionate pain for a moment hardened and chilled again. "I know."

"She come a-stetchin' out her arms to me like she was a-pleadin' and a-prayin' fo' help, a-pleadin' and a-prayin'," repeated Tante Lise dreamily. "But I didn't listen

to her, Miss Val. I tole her to go to her father, a-lyin' dar on de dyin' bed. I tole her dat plain. An' she went, an' knelt down dar beside him all pooty an' young as she is, an' I heern him tell her she must be good to her po' mother and nebba lub nor nebba marry, 'cause de Marchand cuss was on her. I heern him tell her all, po' lil soft white lamb!"

"And she will forget it all in a week," was the cold reply. "Oh, it was folly to bring her here," the lady continued bitterly, "folly, madness. A girl like her, light as thistledown, she should never have known, never have known.

"She do know now, and ain't yo' ebba gwine to tell, Miss Val? Ain't yo' ebba gwine to b'ar witness," whispered Tante Lise tremulously. "Ain't yo' ebba gwine to let God's troof 'bout dat chile see de light?"

"Never," was the quick, stern answer. "What! set the whole world agog with an old wives' tale like that? Never, never, never, Tante Lise. Marjorie will have money, her father's millions. Young, rich,

beautiful, with all that earth can give her, what could a girl ask more?—what could a girl ask more?”

“Yo’s e right, Miss Val, yo’s e right, honey,” answered the old woman submissively, “she couldn’t ask nuffin mo’. And dar ain’t no cuss on her—dar ain’t no sut ob cuss on her. Spec yo’s e all right, Miss Val, only if we was prayin’ Christians we’d have to ’fess and b’ar witness, if we was prayin’ Christians like yo’ ma.”

“Hush! Hush!” Madam Marchand started up and laid a warning hand on the old nurse’s shoulder. “She is stirring, she is waking. Quick, the broth, the wine, Tante Lise. Vera, Vera, darling.” The speaker shook in an agony of fear, suspense, as the soft violet eyes opened and looked around.

There was wondering, bewildered question in their gaze, but the wild terror of the last eight weeks was gone.

“Mama.” The voice was very weak and low. “Are you there, Mama, dear? Oh, I have had such a dreadful dream. Have I been ill, Mama?”

"Yes, dear, you have been ill—very ill, Vera, for a long time, for many weeks."

"And—and where are we, Mama? Is it Dunvallon?"

"Yes, Vera, we are at Dunvallon; we thought it best to bring you here, dearest, where you could be in quiet and peace."

"Oh, yes, yes," was the weary answer. "I feel so weak, so tired, Mama. Donald, where is Donald? I want Donald, Mama."

Like the fiery throe of some ice-locked crater was the pang that rent Valerie Marchand's heart at that cry.

"He can not come just now, Vera," she faltered; "he was called away."

"Away! called away when I was so ill, Mama? He must come back. I want him, Mama, I want him to lift me, Mama, to hold me in his strong, kind arms. Oh, I am frightened still at those dreadful dreams. Send for Donald; send for him at once. Tell him I want him and he must come."

"Yes, dear, yes, we will send, Vera; but you must be patient, dear, patient and quiet until he comes."

"Oh, has he gone far, very far away,

Mama? It is not like Donald to go far when—when I needed him so much, when I was so ill and weak. What is the matter with my arm. It hurts; it is all bandaged. I—I can not lift it.”

“You fell and hurt it, Vera, in your fever, dear. You must be still and not talk so much or the fever will return. Come, Tante Lise has brought you a nice bowl of broth. You must take a little, dear, just a little to give you strength.”

“Oh, I don’t want it,” was the fretful answer. “I don’t want anything.”

“Yes, yo’ does, honey.” Again, as in the olden days, Tante Lise rose to the emergency. “Yes, yo’ does. Yo’s a-gwine to take dis hyah nice broth, and turn over on de pillow and go to sleep so yo’ kin get well and strong and pooty and peart agin. Yes, chile, pooty and peart, as Miss Marjorie dat’s waiting downstairs ter see yo’ now.”

“Marjorie! Marjorie!” The poor, weak, wavering brain roused at the word. “Is Marjorie here? Has Marjorie come? My own beautiful Marjorie. Oh, Mama, let me see her. Oh, I thought I—I dreamed

she was lost, gone, my child, my own dear child. Call her, bring her to me, Tante Lise."

"Not to-night," said Tante Lise firmly. "Not till yo' drink dis hyah broth and go to sleep agin and wake up in de mornin' light. Den I'll bring her to yo', honey, den I'll bring up Miss Marjorie, if yo' wants her."

"Yes, yes, I want her, I want her. Give me the broth. I will drink it; I will go to sleep, Tante Lise, and then—then you will bring Marjorie."

Marjorie! Marjorie! All through the night it was the fitful, fretful cry that pierced the listener's heart with a strange, jealous pang, even while it deadened all pity, all remorse. But for the young, fair life on which she had cast so dark a blight, Valerie Marchand had no thought or care.

Soothed by blessed memories of Saint Cecile, Marjorie had fallen at last into a quiet sleep. Sweet dreams came to her pillow, wet though it was with hopeless tears. She was in the moonlit terrace of Rothesay, at her young lover's side, the low plaint of

the Hungarian waltz was sounding over the splash of the fountain and Lord Earnscliffe was holding their clasped hands in his own.

"Non nobis solum," the words that wreathed his dead wife's picture, seemed to fall in grave tenderness from his lips. "Not for ourselves alone must we think, hope, love; not for ourselves alone was life given."

Non nobis solum, it was the girlish choir of Saint Cecile that was trying the new chant, and the Face Divine on the altar window seemed to smile a benediction as Marjorie's voice led all the rest.

Then a touch, a call roused her, and she woke with the words upon her lips to find Madam Marchand bending over her. "Oh, Grandmama, Grandmama!" With a rush of terrible memory Marjorie flung her arms about the one familiar figure in this desolate home, the old mother whose heart must be breaking under its bitter pain. "Oh, poor Grandmama."

There was no answering tenderness. A kiss cold as a snowflake fell upon the girl's uplifted face. "I woke you because you were singing in your sleep, child. It

sounded ghastly at such a time. I would have spared you all this; it was against my judgment you were sent for, but now that you are here there must be no childish weakness. You are eighteen, Marjorie; at your age I was a wife, a mother, bearing all a woman's burdens. You must bear this trouble that has come upon us as best you can."

"Oh, I will try, I will try," sobbed the girl drearily, conscious that there was no change, no break in the proud strength that had always repelled her.

It was rather as if grandmother had grown harder, colder; as if the iron of her nature had chilled into steel.

There was no sign of weakness, of surrender in the tall, stately form that stood above Marjorie. The soft falling negligée of violet silk, the lace cap on the white hair showed no trace of disorder. Marjorie was too young to read any tracery on the face that had long ago hardened into the rigid lines of a handsome mask.

"Your mother is asking for you, Marjorie," the cold voice went on. "She is bet-

ter—the fever—the delirium has passed. She has been asking for you all night. I need not remind you that she knows nothing of what has occurred—that she must know nothing! She thinks that your father has gone away for a time.”

“Oh, Papa, Papa—poor Mama! Oh, how can I bear it all! How can I bear it!” cried the unhappy girl in a fresh outburst of grief.

“If you are so weak, so childish, do not come near your mother,” the speaker’s voice grew for a moment quick and harsh. “It is as I thought, as I knew. You can be of no help, no comfort; you will only make her worse. And yet—yet she’s calling for you, crying for you. You could turn her thoughts from—from him.”

“Oh, Grandmama, yes, I will come; I will come,” Marjorie started up from her pillow desperately. “I will be calm; I will be strong; I will be good as my dear father asked me with his last breath; I must be good to poor Mama.” And in the dark, sad days that followed Marjorie was faithful to her word.

For her poor mother's weak, wavering mind, vaguely conscious of some past horror of darkness, turned to Marjorie's youth and beauty with feverish delight, clung to her with the jealous, unreasoning claim of a petulant child.

Always when the shadow lifted there were these periods of peevish depression that her husband had known how to cheer and soothe, and Marjorie was called upon to cheer and soothe now.

Up in the long suite of upper rooms, that for years had been a luxurious sanitarium, the unhappy girl watched and waited by her mother's bedside, brushing the long, golden hair, smoothing the troubled brow, holding the restless hands, while down in the darkened house below her father lay in his last sleep.

The world without learned the great capitalist had died suddenly at his seaside home from the rupture of a blood vessel; that his wife was prostrated by the shock; that the funeral rites, according to his wishes, would be simple and attended by only a few intimate friends. And while

Marjorie, seated at her mother's side, listened to her childish babble of the new jewels and gowns she would buy on their next trip to Paris, her father was borne out of the great oaken doors of Dunvallon to the hearse waiting under the cedars, and the simple funeral cortège wound its way out through the gathering mists to the little churchyard by the sea.

"I hear wheels—a carriage—Marjorie, Marjorie," her mother started up eagerly among her silken cushions. "Look out—look out, perhaps it is your father coming home."

And Marjorie stepped to the window and looked out through the blinding tears she could no longer hide, that *must* fall.

"Is it your father coming home, Marjorie?"

"Mama dear, no; not yet," was the low, broken answer. "You know what Papa Perot told you yesterday. He can not come yet."

"Then we must go to him, Marjorie, as soon as I am well; you and I will go to him."

"Yes, Mama." Marjorie had brushed away the tears, and was on her knees beside her mother's couch, "poor little Mama, we will go to him and you will be well and strong and happy with him, Mama." The words broke off in a choked sob.

"Yes, yes; well and strong and happy," echoed her mother. "Oh, Marjorie, darling, how dear and sweet you are. Mama, Tante Lise, they are old and sad, but you are my joy, my light. Don't leave me, Marjorie; stay with me. I—I am so afraid sometimes without your father. Don't leave me while he is gone."

"Dear, dear little Mama," Marjorie clasped the trembling little figure in her young arms and spoke from the depth of her aching, breaking heart. "No, I will never leave you, Mama, while he is gone, I will never leave you."

And that night when the poor, pleading Mama slept Marjorie wrote, with trembling hands, the words that sealed that promise and shut out love and joy from the hopeless darkness gathering around her young life:

"DEAR, DEAR JACK :

"I send you the answer I promised. I have thought and prayed and have learned what is God's will for me. I will never marry. My duty is so clear that I can not, dare not turn from it. Forgive me if for awhile I dreamed of another love—another life. Forgive and forget.

"MARJORIE."

CHAPTER XVI

A WAY OF THORNS

THERE are days, nay, hours, that do the work of years, and the two weeks that followed Marjorie's home-coming seemed a period beyond all her reckoning.

The long, sad hours dragged, leaden-weighted, broken-winged.

Madam Marchand was colder and less approachable than ever before.

Papa Perot was in the city, where, as executor of the great Carmichael estate, a thousand affairs claimed his attention.

With returning strength poor Vera grew more fretful and exacting, while her querulous impatience at her husband's absence tore cruelly at the bleeding wound in Marjorie's heart.

Old Tante Lise, creeping, bent and withered, about the gloomy house, seemed its only friendly presence. The bright, sunken eyes followed Marjorie with pitying interest.

"Honey, chile, yo'se gettin' pale and peaked and puny. Dis hyah bad luck house ain't no fit place fo' yo'. Yo' git out o' it, chile, git out o' it quick ez yo' kin; get back wif de young folks into de sunshine."

"Oh, I can't leave poor Mama, Tante Lise."

"Why can't yo'?" asked the old woman irritably. "Ain't her ma hyah; ain't I hyah, chile, to look out fo' her? Yo' ain't got to stay hyah, but I hez. I hez to wait and to watch. It's time fo' ol' Lise to go, honey, but she can't, she can't! She got to stay and b'ar witness."

"Bear witness to what, Tante Lise?" Marjorie asked listlessly.

"I ain't tellin', honey, I ain't tellin' yet; de time ain't come. Yo'se a prayin' Christian, Miss Marjorie. I'se seen yo' down on your knees ebbery night. Yo' believes dar's a Great Master dat hears what yo' say."

"Oh, yes, yes, Tante Lise," was the tremulous reply. "He hears, I know."

"Pray, den, honey, keep on prayin' bes' yo' kin. Pray dat He'll make de dark ways

plain and de crooked ways straight like I heern de preacher in de camp-meetin' say. Pray dat de day'll come when ol' Lise can b'ar witness, chile."

"I will," said Marjorie gently, humoring the old woman's fancy. "Meantime you should pray yourself as well, Tante Lise."

"No, chile, no; I'se been a-follyin' my missus, young and old, nigh onto sixty years. I'se got to folly her to de end. And if she takes de dark way and de crooked way I'se got to folly her still. She said de word first, and she must say de word last. Tante Lise is weak and shaky and mos' a hunnerd year old, but she got to folly still. She can't die, chile, she got to wait and b'ar witness—b'ar witness."

The old woman's sybilline whisper seemed to add another note to the dreary echoes sounding through Dunvallon's gloom.

Marjorie felt she must escape, for a time at least, from this house of horror, or she, too, might—she dared not shape the thought, the fear that rose in her mind. She must not.

Had not good Father Anselm told her to banish it as an evil thing from her, and trust all to the good God, who would care for her even in her darkness, who would guide her tenderly, however lonely and loveless her way; lead her through any shadow to the Light beyond?

But just now, with the strange whispers of Tante Lise in her ear, with the gloom of the old house bearing upon her, Marjorie felt a wild desire for flight, for freedom. Her mother was happily amused, for the moment, looking over her laces, her jewels, her grandmother was on guard, so taking the long, gray cloak that hung from the deer's antlers in the hall Marjorie wrapped herself in its soft folds and went out of the wide door down the avenue girdled with its ghostly cedars, through the stone gateway into the desolate reaches of sand-dune and sand ridge beyond.

A gleam of afternoon sunshine had broken through the mists, as if instinctively she followed its golden light that parted shimmering vapors into an open path to the sea.

The tide was out; there was no wind to fret the waves that broke listlessly beyond rock and reef, the sail of a distant ship showed beneath the lifting mists in spectral outline against the stretch of unveiled sky.

For the moment the smoke of battle had cleared; there was truce between the warring forces of land and sea.

Marjorie walked on briskly, her young pulses responding to the bracing influences of breeze and sun. Almost before she realized it, she had reached the wreck of the old Spanish galleon that, blackened and barnacle-grown, still lay imbedded in the sand. The sharp end of the prow had broken away into a crumbled heap, over which the sands had drifted into a little hillock, sheltered by the upstanding hulk from wind and tide.

A little tired from her walk the girl sank down on this resting-place, her thoughts straying off wistfully to happier scenes, far away from this desolate shore, to a world of growth and bloom that these barren sands and restless waves seemed only to mark.

Meantime a traveler, who had arrived at Rockport by the noonday boat, was taking the last lap of the five miles that led to this same stretch of sand, Marjorie's little note crushed in his pocket; Marjorie's despairing words of farewell piercing his honest young heart.

Like a bolt from the blue that note had fallen on Rothesay, on Lynnhurst, on all the friends, watching with tender sympathy the course of a beautiful young love that seemed blessed by every kindly fate.

"I don't know what it means," Master Jack had said to Lord Earnscliffe, "but I am going to find out. She has given me no address, but I'll reach this Dunvallon, wherever it is, if I have to search the whole Atlantic coast."

The older man paused for a moment before he said: "The name—her name, too—Carmichael—has always stirred some vague memory, Jack. You know I was very ill after—after my great trouble, and you were too young to remember; but Dunvallon—Carmichael—they seem to belong to that darkness of which I never speak; into which

I dare not look. There was a fine old house there, I know, where they took her—our child—where I went to—to——”

“Don’t, don’t say any more, sir,” Jack had broken in as the speaker’s voice trembled. “I begin to understand, as I never understood before, what strength it took to live, to rally under such a blow.”

“Dunvallon,” repeated the other dreamily, as if he were looking painfully into a clouded past. “The name was there somehow, somewhere. Jack, I can’t quite remember, but it was there.”

“Well, I’ll ask, sir; I’ll inquire at the office in town.” The young man spoke hastily, anxious to change the trend of his companion’s thoughts. “I’ll find Dunvallon wherever it may be, you can rest assured.” And Master Jack, fired with a lover’s impatience, did not delay the quest.

It had brought him here to this barren stretch of shore, that, half veiled, half revealed by breaking mists, seemed vaguely familiar, as he strode along seeking for further direction.

The reef, the point, the shadowy sand-

dunes, the hulk of that old wreck rising black upon the beach, surely he had seen all these before.

Ah! Lord Earnscliffe had been right, this was the place darkened by the cruel tragedy he had been too young to comprehend; this was the cloudland through which he had wandered on that unforgotten day of his early boyhood. And the big, loose-jointed figure that came swaying down the beach toward Master Jack made conviction complete.

"Good day, my man," he said. "Can you help me to get my bearings? I am looking for a place called Dunvallon. Am I on the right track?"

"You be, sir, on the right track. It's about half a mile farther on."

The speakers had paused by the old wreck, and the girl seated in its shadow caught the sound of a voice that made her heart leap with joy and then almost stand still.

"Thanks," it said pleasantly, "I wonder if you've been on these sands enough to remember anything about a lady that was

flung ashore here from a wrecked yacht, about—let me see—about eighteen years ago?”

“I do, sir; ’twas me pulled the boat in.”

“By George, so it was; I remember your face now. You’re the good fellow that I followed that day over the beach and the reef.”

“Lord, Lord, yes; I mind you now, sir; I mind you well, and a peart little chap you was, to be sure, that wanted to see and know everything. And the poor gentleman that lost his wife, I ain’t forgot him neither. Nor the hundred dollars he sent me for dragging the poor lady in. And you are here looking for Dunvallon. No kin to Mr. Carmichael, be you, sir?”

“None. I did not know him at all,” was the brief answer.

“Then you missed something, sir; he was a fine man.” The years had loosened big Bart’s once silent tongue. “A great man, and a sure loss to the Barrens. There ain’t been sickness or trouble or want on this ere shore for nigh twenty year that Mr. Carmichael did not stretch out a helping hand.

And his poor lady she is left very bad, as we all hear."

"Ill! Mrs. Carmichael is very ill, you say?" was the anxious question.

"Well, no, sir; not exactly ill, but—but," the speaker paused, as if unwilling to proceed. "She ain't so to say well, sir; that's the reason they keep so close to themselves at Dunvallon, the lady ain't so to say exactly well. But if you're thinking to go there, it ain't far, as I say. If you'll wait a bit, sir, till I make my boat fast agin the incoming tide I will go up with you to the gate."

"All right, my friend. I remember vaguely your dire warning of suckholes, so I'll wait."

But as big Bart swung away in long strides over the sands Marjorie started up pale and breathless from her shelter.

"Jack," she called tremulously, "oh, Jack, Jack."

"Marjorie!" and all things were forgotten for one brief moment of rapture as he caught the extended hands in his, looked again into the sweet uplifted eyes and read their welcome—the welcome she could not

hide. "Marjorie, my darling, my darling—oh, how pale you are, how worn and sad! My poor little girl! You have suffered, I see—oh, sadly suffered. And you would send me from you in your grief and pain, Marjorie; send me from you when you so need love and hope and comfort? Oh, why, Marjorie, why?"

"Because I must. I must," she answered brokenly. "Oh, Jack, I wrote to you; I told you that all was over. I gave you my answer, Jack."

"There is but one answer I will take from you. Look up into my face, Marjorie, straight and clear with those true, honest eyes." He put his hand under her chin and tenderly lifted the drooping head. "Say, if you can with truth, I do not love you, Jack."

She looked up as he compelled her into the eyes that had grown to be the light of her woman's life. "Oh, I can not, I can not," she faltered.

"Then it is settled," he said. "Nothing else counts, Marjorie. I am yours, and you are mine. Nothing in heaven or earth can stand between us."

"Oh, hush! hush!" she cried as if he had dealt her a sword thrust. "Don't say that, Jack, until you hear—until you know."

"I can hear nothing, know nothing that will send me from you, my darling, my poor little darling. You are nervous, you have been under a terrible strain. It is this place, this gloomy, desolate place, with its fogs and mists that is confusing, bewildering you."

"Oh, no—no," she answered drearily. "I am not confused or bewildered, Jack. It is all plain before me why you must go—leave me—why I must not love nor marry, Jack."

"Why must you not love nor marry?" he repeated fiercely. "Who dares forbid it?"

"My father, Jack, my poor father with his last breath."

"Your father! Why he must have been raving, delirious, Marjorie. You will not surely listen to a dying man's unreasoning, unjust demand that you should never love nor marry. This is simply monstrous."

"Oh, Jack, no, no," her hopeless tone fell like a death chill upon his fire. "Oh, I must

tell you all, all that I would have spared you, Jack, all that I hoped you need never know. It will hurt you so, it will grieve you, but I must tell.

"Poor Mama! You heard what that man said just now, Jack."

"That she was ill," he answered, wondering at the fear, the agony he saw in her uplifted eyes.

"Ah, it is worse than illness—worse than death; these poor people here guess, but they are too kind to give it name; but you must hear, Jack, you must know the trouble that has come upon her—that may—may come upon me, her child—as it has come upon all of her race for a hundred years. None of them has escaped—not one has escaped, Jack. I made Papa Perot tell me all so I could be strong enough, brave enough, to send you from me. None of them escape, Jack."

"Escape—escape what, Marjorie?" His voice had caught the tone of hers as he began vaguely, dimly, to see the horror pressing upon her.

She went on as if he understood. "Some-

times they are only foolish and flighty, Jack ; sometimes, oh, much, much worse. They turn against those that love them, those they *love*, Jack, and hurt," and her voice sank to a whisper, "try to kill, even to kill."

"Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed the young man. "Marjorie, you must not speak, you must not think of such horrors. They can not touch you, my darling, my darling, they can not touch you."

"They have touched Mama," she answered, "and I am *her child*."

"Marjorie! Marjorie!" he cried sharply, as full revelation burst upon him. "This, then, is what your note meant—this wild fear and fancy is all, all that stands between us."

"Ah! it is no fear, no fancy," she said drearily. "Why should I escape the curse, the doom of all my race? I did not know it had always been kept from me until Papa died. If I had known, Jack, if I had known—" the sweet voice broke.

"If you had known," he echoed, "if you had known it could have made no difference. We would have loved the same, Mar-

jorie, we would have loved the same. If there were a thousand curses and dooms upon you I would love you the same. But there are none, there are none, this is all folly, Marjorie, the wildest folly. This accursed place with its fogs and mists is filling you with unreal terrors. I will not leave you here, Marjorie, you must come back with me to Rothesay, to Lynnhurst, to Aunt Betty and Bernice. You must marry me at once, my darling, and come back."

"Oh, I can not, I can not listen to you any longer. I must not, Jack, or, or my heart will break. Every day I have prayed for courage and strength."

"You don't want courage and strength, sweetheart," he interrupted, "I have enough for both. Rest safe in my love, we'll find our heaven on earth, darling, our heaven on earth."

His arm was around her now, his voice rich, deep, compelling in its tender mastery, sounding in her ear, piercing the aching depths of her woman's heart, and for one brief moment that young heart rose in wild revolt against its doom. Heaven on earth—

ah, she would listen; she would forget all things else and follow where love would lead her—she would find heaven on earth.

Heaven—but not the heaven of Saint Cecile; not the light that shone on the altar window; not the love that could lead beyond above the storm and darkness of earth. Heaven! Jack had struck a note that thrilled into music he could not hear, that swelled into realms beyond his reach. The soft flush died on Marjorie's cheek; she grew pale and strong again. Gently she withdrew herself from the encircling arm.

"Ah, no, Jack," she said sadly. "No, no, no. It would not be heaven. It could not. In heaven there is no doubt or fear or dread such as would be mine—such as would be yours. Love could not banish it. Poor Papa tried—he tried, Jack, and oh, I must tell you all—it was poor Mama's hand that struck the blow from which he died."

"Marjorie," there was horror in the tone which the young man could not conceal. "Oh, Marjorie, my poor darling, you here at her mad mercy."

"Oh, I do not fear, I do not fear that,"

she answered. "Poor little Mama, she is very gentle and quiet now; she knows nothing of what has passed, she thinks Papa is away and will come back.

"But I—I know all—all that has been—all that may be. Never, never could I—would I, bring the sorrow I have seen here into your life—into your home—to your dear, true, brave heart, Jack; no, no. I love you too well. I love you too well."

"Marjorie, I will risk it all, all," was the passionate answer. "I have no doubt, no fear; if I had—if I had they would count as nothing against my love, Marjorie, that love will be your strength, your safety, beloved. You can not face this doubt, this fear alone. With such a horror of darkness around you, Marjorie, you must turn to the light."

"I must—I must, Jack," she answered, her voice trembling. "But not to the light you mean. It would be bright and beautiful, I know, but it would lead us astray, Jack. Oh, I have seen into what dark ways it can lead; what frightful ways this light of love. But there is another light that shines

through all the darkness, all the storms of earth, a light you can not see."

"Nor you, either, my poor Marjorie," he answered. "Earth is all, darling, as the sad story you have told me proves. Earth with its sweet, strong, human love is all. There is nothing beyond but misty visions, pious dreams."

"Oh, Jack, my poor blind, blind Jack," she said sadly. "This is the worst darkness of all. It breaks my heart to have you feel, think like this."

"Can you tell me that thinking, fearing, all that you think and fear, you still can believe and hope in a God who seems so pitiless to you, Marjorie?"

"Yes; I believe and hope," she answered slowly. "For it is only a little while we are here on earth, Jack. And darkness for a little while does not count if we can see beautiful light beyond. Light that will never change or fail. Love that, even if the mist comes to me, will guard and help me still; will give me at the last all and a thousand times more than has been denied me here. This is the truth I have been taught,

Jack. This my belief and hope, would you take them from me?"

"Marjorie, no, no, my sweet little saint; no, no," and the speaker's voice was husky with remorseful tenderness. "Keep to your belief and hope, give them to me, beloved, teach me to believe and hope with you. If you send me from you I will be blind, indeed. I will be lost in the very blackness of despair."

It was the last—the hardest test—of her new-found woman's strength, and she quivered under it.

"Ah, that hurts me so, and you are too kind, too brave to hurt me, Jack."

"Hurt you, Marjorie?"

"Yes; yes, when you say wild, wicked words like those. For I can not change. I can not—can not weaken, Jack—I, who am only a weak, loving girl. Oh, help me—be strong with me, for me. There, Bart is coming back. He will take you to Rockport in his boat. Oh, go with him, Jack, and forget me, or no, no, remember me as you remember the dead—the dead who loved you."

"Marjorie!" he cried.

But big Bart was upon them now, coming with swinging stride through the mists that had closed again. Gleam of sun and stretch of blue had vanished, all was gray and dim.

"Ready now, sir, if you want to go to Dunvallon. Why, Lord, Lord, Miss Carmichael is here herself."

"Yes," answered Marjorie hastily. "I was walking on the beach and met Mr. Mason. And as he was coming to see me he will not care now to go to the house. I told him you would take him to Rockport in time to catch the boat."

"Why, certainly, certainly," answered Bart. "It will save you a good bit of a tramp, sir. I've got as trig and taut a craft as you ever seen. I will be proud and happy to take you, sir; proud and happy, sure."

"It is good-by, then," said Marjorie, "good-by," and as she stretched out her hand to him there was a look in her uplifted eyes such as he had never seen in them before—a look that awed and silenced all appeal.

CHAPTER XVII

STORM BEATEN

BUT Marjorie found that her battle had only begun. Repulse is not defeat, and love entrenched himself on these desolate shores and laid siege.

Master Jack did not return to Rothesay; a brief note informed Lord Earnscliffe that he would spend a few weeks by the ocean. He had found comfortable quarters at a little place called Rockport, where the deep-sea fishing was fine.

And though three weeks passed without further tidings, the lonely watcher at Rothesay felt no fear. All was well, he thought, with friendly sympathy, in a forgetfulness he could understand. The young people had met again and all had been explained. In the joy of their reunion they were oblivious of friends and time.

And as he paced the silent portico of Rothesay, thinking of the happy young pair,

dreams such as he had not known for years came to the Arthur Eveleth of old. The darkness that had rested so long upon him seemed to part and he looked into a vista brightened by the reflected light of these glad young lives—the boy to whom he had given the place of a son in his desolate heart, and the girl to whom he had been drawn with such inexplicable tenderness, who had stirred untouched chords of his soul into gentle music strangely soothing and sweet; the girl whom he would have chosen out of all the world for Jack's wife. How her laugh, her voice, would wake the silent echoes of this beautiful home; how her glad young presence would fill the great rooms with love and hope and joy; how she would scatter the happy largesse of her own full life all around her.

And then, even as he dreamed, there came the clatter of horse's hoofs up the hill and the messenger who was sent twice a day to the post-office leaped to the steps and delivered the evening mail. There were papers, pamphlets, a couple of business letters whose purport he knew, and one addressed

in a quaint, old-fashioned hand, postmarked Rockport.

He tore it open eagerly.

"TO LORD EARNSCLIFFE:

"Honored and noble sir," it began, with old-world formality, "I take the liberty of addressing you in regard to your young friend and relative, Mr. John Mason, in whose health and well-being I know you have deep interest. He is endangering both seriously by remaining in this place. As friend and physician I have advised change of air and scene at once. But as I have failed to persuade him, I beg you, honored sir, for the young gentleman's sake, to use your greater influence and urge his return home at once. I have the honor to remain, sir, with assurances of great regard,

"Your obedient servant,

"PIERRE PEROT, M. D."

Two, three times the recipient of this strange missive read the stilted lines with growing anxiety. Jack ill—in danger—in trouble! What did this enigmatic and yet

evidently friendly communication mean? Pierre Perot! Dr. Pierre Perot. Surely not the Dr. Pierre Perot of whom he had heard across the sea, the wonderful old diagnostician and surgeon of Paris, whose fame drew the sick and suffering from every capital of Europe! Yet it was the name surely. What could have brought the great Doctor Perot to Rockport to write thus of Jack? Smitten with a sudden fear that chilled all the new-found glow in his heart, Lord Earnscliffe resolved to find the answer to these questions without delay himself. It was noon of the next day when he reached the little fishing village that, with its cove sheltered by a jutting stretch of sand, its rude wharf often submerged at high tide, was the only point of approach for miles of desolate and dangerous shore. Rockport boasted half a dozen stores, a post-office, a meeting-house, a little church with a cross-crowned spire, some two score cottages of various degrees of respectability set back from the beach. All the rest was fish market. Fish were in boxes, in barrels, ready for shipping; fish lay glimmering in silvery

rows ready for packing; fish were there for smoking, salting, kippering.

Lord Earnscliffe picked his way by fish-wharf and fish-sheds, wondering what had led a fastidious young traveler to linger in a place like this, when suddenly a boat pushed up to the sands almost at his feet and a familiar voice shouted :

"Hold on, Bart, I'll get some dry clothes on and go back with you for another catch."

"Not to-day, sir," was the answer; "no more deep-sea work to-day. There's bad weather brewing out yon."

"Bah! Who cares for bad weather! But I forget you're a family man. Go home, if you will. I can tackle the whitecaps alone." And the speaker turned to face the startled gaze of Lord Earnscliffe.

"Cousin Arthur!" he cried in amazement.

"Jack, my dear boy, Jack!"

Jack, indeed, but not the brave, bright, handsome Jack of a month ago. A haggard, hollow-eyed man, browned, it is true, with sun and wind, but of a dull, dead hue under the tan; a man whose wind-blown hair fell disordered upon his brow, whose loose-

fitting sailor garb was drenched with salt-sea spray. But the hand that clasped Lord Earnscliffe burned with fever heat.

"Jack, great Heaven, how you have changed! You are ill, indeed," said the older man.

"Oh, just a touch of malaria; nothing to hurt, sir. I'm all right this morning. George, how we took those breakers! Even Bart lost his nerve, and thought we were gone, but I had the tiller and brought her in."

"You are wet to the skin," said Lord Earnscliffe, shocked beyond words by the new recklessness of eye and voice. "You must change your clothes at once, my boy. I want you to go back with me, Jack, to go back home."

"Old Perot wrote to you," said the young man, with a short, hard laugh. "He has been threatening to bring you down on me. I am sorry, sir, but I can't go yet, not quite yet. It was good of you to come. I fully understand how good, but I can't leave Rockport just yet."

"Get in your dry clothes and then we'll

talk about it. Where are you holding out?" said Lord Earnscliffe gently.

"Up here in this little cottage," answered Jack, turning toward an open gate. "Since you are down here, let Mrs. Doyle, my landlady, put you up for the night. There is no boat until to-morrow."

"It seems Hobson's choice, then," said the other, dryly, as he passed into a little parlor decorated with shells and sea-grass. The model of a small fishing craft stood in a glass case in the corner, a picture of its late master stared from a gilt frame on the mantel. The widow Doyle herself was frowsy and unkempt.

The master of Rothesay engaged lodgings for the night with a distaste he could not altogether conceal.

"It do be a poor place for grate folks, I know, sor," said the widow, "but Mr. Ma-son has been here three weeks to the day, and has never complained nayther of room, nor vittles, nor nothin' ilse, and payin' his seven dollars reg'lar, loike a gintleman, and out ivery day in the fishin' boats workin' as if 'twas for his own bread and mate. But

it's too rough for him, as I can see. He has lost twinty pounds, if he has lost an ounce; he nayther ates nor slapes, for he is often up half the noight, walkin' the sands. It will be bist for him to go from a rough place loike this, much bist for him to go."

And the restless, feverish light in Master Jack's eyes when he rejoined his cousin corroborated the landlady's words.

"You are ill, my boy, as I have heard—as I can see. Lie down for a while and rest before you go out again."

"Rest," the young man laughed, and it was a laugh not pleasant to hear. "Rest! Lord, if I could, sir! But I can't. When I try to rest a stifle—I choke. There are a thousand questions that you would ask me that you have the right to ask. You have been the best of friends, the kindest and most generous of fathers to me. Come out on the beach where we can be alone and I will try"—there was a tremor in the once strong young voice that went to his hearer's heart—"I will try to tell you all."

And far out on the sandy point, where the waves came up hoarse voiced, Jack,

stretched at Lord Earnscliffe's feet, told his story—Marjorie's story of her mother's heritage, of the shadow of doom that rested on her own young life, of her immovable resolve that that shadow should never fall on him.

"She will not see me. She will not hear me," he concluded. "My letters are sent back with a pitiful plea to go, leave her, forget her, for she will never change. And her uncle, that cursed old croaker, Perot—"

"Perot," interrupted the older man, who had listened until now in a bewilderment of doubt, fear, horror, to which he could give no words. "Doctor Pierre Perot, the great French physician, is he her uncle?"

"Her great-uncle, her godfather. He has been watching over her mother, over her from her birth. If he would speak for me, help me, she might listen. But he will not, he will not." A fierce oath burst from the speaker's trembling lips. "She sent him to me to tell me what he thought, what he felt—that she was right—right—that with such a heritage as hers no woman should ever marry. That even if, as he hopes, she

may escape, there is always danger—danger! I do not fear it. I will not hear of it. My love would save her, shield her. They shall not frighten me, drive me away. I will not leave this place until I take my darling with me, out of the shadow of her gloomy home, out of hearing of all these whispers of horror and fear, out of reach of her poor crazed mother.”

“My boy, my poor boy, she—the old doctor—are right, Jack.” There was infinite pity, fatherly tenderness in the older man’s voice. “You must come home with me. This struggle, this resistance, is only torturing you, torturing her. You must come home with me.”

“Don’t ask me, sir. I can not, I can not,” and the speaker started to his feet as if pierced to the heart by the plea. “Go back to Rothesay, to Lynnhurst, without Marjorie! Go back to the home that is waiting for her, to the friends she loved! Go back to the heights of paradise, and find them black, empty, desolate!”

“I can understand, Jack, I can understand. Then we will go abroad, you and I

—to Paris, Egypt, Japan, wherever you please. Or we will shake the dust of civilization off our feet and plunge into the wilds. You shall show me the heights and depths of this great country of yours. I have had symptoms of the *wanderlust* of late, but I can not wander alone. I am growing old, and I need you, Jack.” The last touch told. Jack flung himself down on the sands again at this true friend’s feet and clasping the kind hand that he felt was outstretched to help him and save him, lifted it to his fevered lips as if he would hush the hoarse, dry sob that burst from him unawares.

“You will come with me, my boy, to-morrow.”

“Oh, not to-morrow, not to-morrow, sir. I will see her to-morrow. I must see her again.”

“When it is only cruel pain to you both,” was the grave answer. “When she pleads with you to spare her this persistence, Jack.”

“I will not grieve, I will not pain her. She will not even see me. She comes to church, and does not know I am there. But I go in my boating clothes with the other

poor fisher-folk. I sit far back in the rough crowd, and I watch her pray. Ah, she is pale and thin, my poor darling! There are shadows under her eyes, lines of pain around her lovely mouth, but—but when I see her kneeling there, her beautiful face uplifted in faith and hope, I can not understand. My own wild beating heart seems to grow calm and at rest. Oh, surely that gentle prayer must be heard if there is One to hear and pity and help!"

"Ah, Jack, Jack! You are reaching into depths we can not plumb," was the sad reply. "Or rather to heights veiled from mortal eyes. If one could only believe as that sorely tried little girl believes, hope as she hopes, life would not be the hard puzzle it is."

"She would have taught us," said the young man. "She was teaching me already. I was beginning to see dimly the light she followed. Now, all is gloom again, black, hopeless gloom."

"We must find a way through it together, my boy," Lord Earnscliffe laid his hand on his companion's shoulder. They

had risen now, warned away by the waves that came surging up, white crested, almost to their feet. "Do you remember, Jack, coming out to me one dark day, when I stood on just such a slight foothold as this? I was wavering between two worlds, in neither of which I could see guide nor light. You slipped your boyish hand in mine, Jack, little guessing from what you were holding me. You talked to me of her I had lost. You recalled her gentle pride in the motto of our race. '*Non nobis solum.*' Do you remember, Jack?"

"Oh, yes, sir, yes," was the answer. "Have I not been treading those same sands, that same reef, every day? Dunvallon, her home, is just beyond it."

"Just beyond it," echoed Lord Earncliffe. "Then—then it is as I thought."

"It lies just five miles from here," said Jack. "The shore accursed for us both. Don't go near it, sir, for God's sake. It will bring back all—all the agony that I understand now, as I never understood before. Cousin Arthur, don't go near Dunvallon."

"It is the place, then," said the other. "A

wide old house, guarded by cedars, half hidden in the mists, and it was her, it was Marjorie's father, that met me there, that sheltered, cared for Elinor's child."

"Yes, sir, yes," assented Jack, "every fisherman on the beach remembers the story. I would not have brought you here to face these horrible memories for all the world. I did not dream that you would come. But the tide is rising and we must go on. Besides, I am afraid," the speaker forced a reassuring smile, "the fever has got me this afternoon. I have fought it off for the last three days, but that drenching this morning brought on the chill. I'll be all right tomorrow, but just now I am down and out, sure."

And Master Jack was down and out with a fierce malarial attack for the rest of the day. The one young doctor of the place was far up on the coast, making his daily rounds, but Mrs. Doyle, wise in the ways of "ague," proved an efficient nurse.

Under her ministrations the patient fell about sunset into a restful sleep. "But this is no place for him," she grimly repeated.

"There's some folks can't shtand our fogs and mists—they poine and die without the sun. He ought to be tuk away into the sun."

"And he shall be to-morrow morning," resolved Lord Earnscliffe firmly, as, leaving Mrs. Doyle to care for her sleeping charge, he went out into the open for a breath of air.

He felt stifled, oppressed, not only by long hours in the close, fever-tainted room, but by the hopeless darkness that had fallen on those two young lives, whose brightness had cast a ray into his own shadowed path. His heart ached for them with an almost physical pain, for he felt the old doctor in his wisdom, Marjorie in her sweet self-sacrifice, were right. Jack must leave her; there could be no compromise with so stern and pitiless a fate. It was all a part of the dark mystery, through which he could not see, against which he had ceased to rebel. But the weight of it lay heavy upon him to-night and was more than his stoic philosophy could upbear.

The sun had gone down in a bank of

murky clouds, through the thickening fog came the roar of angry waves, beating upon point and reef, that held them at bay. The cloudy chaos, without bound or limit, this harsh clamor of contending forces seemed to image the dreary waste and struggle of life. Yet beyond all these mists and veils and vapors there ruled a vivifying light, above all these warring discords there was law, for earth and tide and star. Surely for man there must be something more than with his puny powers he could hear or see. Marjorie, with her young heart bleeding, her young life blighted, her young hopes lying crushed around her, could kneel and pray. Poor child, poor child. And again, as always, with the thought of the girl Jack loved, there came that tender stir of the desolate heart.

What if for little Marjorie there was voice, there was vision, to which he was deaf and blind, there was strength of which neither he nor Jack could know.

And with such thoughts, such questionings, pressing upon him, Lord Earnscliffe strode on vigorously, as was his custom when

perturbed, heedless of the untried ways he was venturing, of the fogs, growing thicker each moment, of the threatening voices that told of the rising storm. Despite his silvered hair, his fifty years, the stalwart Englishman had still all the vigor of manhood's prime, and his easily swinging stride had borne him for miles along the sands when he became conscious of hoarse voices shouting in the unseen distance, the glimmer of lights shining hazily through the mists.

He paused cautiously, realizing that he was alone and unarmed on a wild and dangerous stretch of coast. Clearer and closer came on the lights and voices, and some half dozen rough-clad men, swinging signal lanterns, loomed up almost at his side. With them was a slight, bent figure of one who, feeble and old as he was, seemed to command the rest.

"Which way would the poor lady be like to take, doctor?" asked one of the group.

"Ah, that, *mes amis*, God only knows. It is for you to search. If I were twenty, nay, ten years younger I would go with you, but I have neither the strength nor sight. And

though I know the brave men to whom Donald Carmichael has been friend and neighbor for twenty years would not ask for reward, it will be five hundred dollars to him who brings the mistress of Dunvallon home."

"We'll get her, sir," went up a hoarse-voiced chorus. "We'll find her. She can't be far, don't fear, sir. We'll bring the poor lady home."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CONQUERING LIGHT

LORD EARNSCLIFFE had heard this startling colloquy in dumb dismay. Now as the lights and their bearers scattered hurriedly in the fog he turned to the old man, who still stood where they had left him.

"Doctor Perot, I am sure. I am Arthur Eveleth, Lord Earnscliffe, to whom you were good enough to write.

"Ah, yes, yes, yes," the old doctor held out both hands in cordial greeting. "You have come, as I thought you would, *mon ami*, come to help, to save your boy."

"Can I do anything to assist you in this new trouble?" asked the other. "I had no intention of intruding, but I happened to be walking out here on the beach after a bad afternoon with Jack, and heard."

"That she, our poor little lady, is gone, is

lost. *Mon ami*, yes; it is nothing so very new. All her sad, bewildered life she has done like this, but her husband was here to watch, to guard her in her wandering. You understand, *mon ami*, how it is. Your boy, that fine young man, whom I would save, has told you all?"

"Yes, he has told me all. It is a tragic story."

"Ah, *mon ami*, it is. Never until now did I know how tragic, how full of despair. These young hearts that bleed, these young lives that must be blighted, all these sweet, natural hopes that must be crushed. But you see, *mon ami*, you have heard even now what there is to dread. Where that poor mother is gone out in this darkness I do not know. She stole away from the house more than an hour ago. She will brave the fogs, the night, the storm without fear. Ah, do you hear those waves? In an hour they will be thundering up on this shore in a fury neither you nor I, still less a frail woman, could withstand. And she is out wandering, God only knows where."

"She must be found before the storm

breaks," was the hurried answer. "I will turn back to Rockport at once. I may find her on the way. Or I can rouse the men there for a search."

"*Mon ami*, no, no, no; it would be useless. Besides, you could not reach Rockport now. The sea would drive you back from the beach you have walked in safety, and there are quicksands beyond, quicksands whose warning signs you could not see. You must come back with me to Dunvallon. We are all old people there except the little Marjorie, all old and feeble and helpless, and what the storm and darkness may bring to us I dare not think. Come, be with us through the night."

"I will gladly," was the answer, for there was an appeal in the old man's voice that his hearer could not resist. "Though it is true life has no very great charm for me," Lord Earnscliffe went on, as, drawing his companion's arm into his to steady the faltering footsteps, the two took their way through the mists. "I have no fancy to end it in a quicksand. This has been a fatal shore to me," he added in a lower tone. "I lost my

wife here less than twenty years ago; perhaps you have heard of the yacht wrecked out beyond."

"*Mon Dieu*, yes, yes; and the young mother, child. And they were yours, *mon ami*, yours? Ah! you have suffered indeed; it is such suffering that makes men strong and brave and compassionate. Ah! I have heard of you, my good Lord Earnscliffe, abroad; of the hospital, of the children's nursery, of the charity wards in Paris, in Vienna, in Berlin, that bear your wife's name. And you lost her here, here; it was here she went to the good God, with her child in her arms. Ah! *mon ami*, it was bitter sorrow, indeed, but there are worse sorrows—such sorrow as darkens this hapless home we are entering now."

They turned into the gateway of Dunvallon as the old doctor spoke. The tall cedars rose like shrouded specters in the mist; the glimmer of half-seen lights marked the shadowy outlines of the house, the house that the Arthur Eveleth of old remembered as men remember some dim, terrible dream. But that dream had lost

something of its terror now. In the face of the anguish that abided in this darkened home, how could he complain? And as he thought of the poor, distraught mother wandering out into the night, the storm, of the beautiful young life blighted in its first glad bloom, his own sorrow seemed tender and merciful. He could speak of it to-night, of her who lay far away beneath the green English turf, with her babe on her breast. "I have been here before," he said. "I did not fully remember the name, the place, until Jack recalled it. I was very ill afterward, and all the night, with its awful memories, became to me like a half-forgotten dream. But I remember now the gate, the cedars, the house and that its master was most kind. He had the child brought here for proper care, but it was in vain, of course. It died that night. But there are worse sorrows than death, as you say. This poor little girl here is crushed beneath a heavier one now."

"Not crushed, *mon ami*," answered the old man softly. "The little one has strength which your world and mine does not know.

Ah, it is wonderful, that strength! With all her tender young heart hungering for joy and love, to stifle its cry, to turn so bravely into lonely ways, dark and bare and cold. But she has been taught, *mon ami*, taught lessons your books and mine do not hold, taught to look beyond the cloud, the darkness, beyond even the direst doom of earth to light that does not fail. And so you will find her changed, perhaps, saddened, but not crushed."

They had reached the house now, the great hall door stood wide open; there was an excited group gathered on its threshold. Madam Marchand, all her proud strength shaken; Marjorie, pale and tremulous; Tante Lise, old Davy, cook and maid from the kitchen, were waiting to hear, to see. "Vera, my child, my poor child, Pierre—Pierre, you have not found her?"

"Not yet, *ma chère sœur*, not yet," answered the old doctor with forced cheer. "But the men are all out. Bart, and Steve, and Jim; all of them brave men and strong, that know every inch of the shore and would risk their lives to find and bring our little

lady back to us. So, courage, *ma Valerie*; courage, *ma filleule*. See the friend I have found and brought home with me." But Marjorie had already seen. With a low, glad cry she started forward, holding out her trembling hand in greeting.

"Ah, you have come, as I knew you would, when you heard. You have come to save, to help Jack."

"My sister, Madam Marchand—Lord Earnscliffe," said Doctor Perot, with old-school formality. "He was about to dare a return to Rockport, betwixt the quicksands and the waves, when I warned him and brought him here for the night."

"And he is most welcome," said the lady, forcing courteous speech from lips that were drawn in a torture of suspense and fear. "You find us in great anxiety, Lord Earnscliffe. My daughter, who has been ill for some time, has wandered away."

"So I understand," replied the gentleman. "And if there is anything I can do to allay your fears, pray command me, madam. I am at your service for the night."

"Thanks, thanks," she said, "but there is nothing yet, nothing. Oh, they will find her; they will bring her home shortly, I am sure. Pierre, they will bring my darling home."

"Surely, surely, *ma Valerie*; but come, you are cold, you are trembling, and you, too, *ma filleule*. Come in, come in, there is the chill of death in these accursed fogs of yours; come in, all. Heap up the fire, my Davy, and let us have warmth and light and cheer, while we watch and wait."

And Davy heaped up the fire and they watched and waited, while the wind rose each moment into fiercer fury and the dull boom of the waves grew into the thunderous battle roar of the storm. Louder and louder it grew, until the stout walls of Dunvallon seemed to tremble as they echoed back the sound, while the barred windows shook and rattled and the cedars bent and writhed in the shrieking blasts. And still the searchers on the shore did not return.

"Oh, Mama, poor little Mama," sobbed Marjorie. "Oh, God, pity her, help her, my poor little Mama."

"She may have found safety, shelter,

somewhere. Perhaps they have taken her into one of the cabins on the beach," comforted Lord Earnscliffe and Doctor Perot. But Valerie Marchand, pacing the room with pale, tight-pressed lips and clenched hands, felt there was neither comfort nor hope. Was this the end of her long, fierce struggle against a relentless fate? This the end of her wild mother-love? This the end for which she had battled and suffered and sinned, for which she had sacrificed the hearts, the hopes, the loves that lay in her idol's way?

Earth and air and sea had risen against her, or was it God who was punishing her, the God whom she had defied, rejected, nay, almost forgotten in these last dark years, until Marjorie had come to Dunvallon with the old Faith in her heart, the old prayers on her lips, to torture her with newly awakened fear and remorse?

"Miss Val, honey, Miss Val, yo'se a-gwine to walk yo'se'f sick." It was Tante Lise's trembling voice that pleaded with her. "Sit down by de fire, Miss Val, and take a li'l cup o' tea."

"Oh, Grandmama, yes, yes, please, you

look so white and strange," and Marjorie's young arm was round her waist. "Lie down here on the couch and rest, Grandmama."

"Rest!" was the harsh-toned echo. "Rest! with my child lost, dying, perhaps, out in this storm; dying without hope or help."

"Oh, Grandmama, no, not without hope or help. God is with her in the darkness. He will pity, help her. Let us pray to Him for mercy. Let us pray, Grandmama."

They were alone now, except for Tante Lise. Doctor Perot and Lord Earnscliffe had gone up to the tower of the west wing to look out. "Pray!" repeated the wretched woman bitterly. "Pray! It is too late, too late. The curse of God is on me and mine, a curse that no prayer can lift."

"Oh, it can, it can," sobbed Marjorie. "Don't say that, dear Grandmama. It is only that we are in the darkness and can not see, can not know, but He is there, the good God is there. Let us ask Him to help to take care of poor Mama. Lie down there, you are so tired, poor Grandmama, and I will hold your hands and we will pray together."

"I can not, I can not, I dare not." With a despairing moan the speaker flung herself down upon the luxurious cushions of the couch, her face buried in her hands.

"Oh, no, she can't, honey, she can't," mumbled old Tante Lise, shaking her head. "My po' Miss Val can't; doan yo' ask her, chile. It would bring down the jedgment. But yo' kin, Miss Marjorie, yo' kin; so pray, honey chile, like dem good nuns showed yo; pray, chile, pray." And with one gentle hand smoothing the silver head of the woman prostrate in mute despair beside her, the other holding the beads of her rosary, Marjorie prayed, the old, simple prayers of Saint Cecile, the prayers that every child of the Church learns to lisp at that great Mother's knee, the prayers that Valerie Marchand herself had breathed trustingly, fervently, in a blessed, far-off past. For a brief while the low, soft, murmur fell unheeded upon the long dulled ears, the hard, cold heart; then slowly memory began to waken, pictures to start out of the mists of years. The quaint, dim chapel of her own old convent home, the red glow

of the altar lamps, beneath which she had knelt for the twilight Rosary; the white-veiled ranks at the early Mass; her own First Communion morn.

Softly, steadily swelling, went on the low pleading for grace, for help, for mercy, while the wind moaned and shrieked like some lost spirit, fierce with baffled fury, and the thunderous roar of the sea seemed to mock the puny strength and will of man.

The great doors of Dunvallon shook, the barred windows rattled. It was as if all the evil powers of earth and sea and air had been unleashed for a last onslaught on this doomed home.

And still the soft, low supplication went up in sweet trust and faith to a heaven that was veiled in starless gloom. The two men, back from their lookout above, paused on the curtained threshold and listened with quiet reverence. But on Valerie Marchand the gentle murmur fell with the growing strength of the trickling stream, whose softening flow can loose the iceberg, whose hidden force can rend the rock. As she lay there crushed, prostrate, a gush of memories

seemed sweeping her from her moorings, those ice-locked moorings on which her soul had slept for more than two score years. Once she had prayed like this; once God had been to her a Friend and a Father, the God who must now be her Judge. Proud, passionate, headstrong, she had been heedless of all warnings; she had forced His barriers, defied even the human wisdom that spoke His will, grasped, crushed, sacrificed all that lay in her path without pity or remorse. And when God's hand lay heavy upon her, she had hardened at the pain, flung the shadow of the doom she had invoked on all around her—on the blinded lives, the noble, generous husband; on the child—the child whom she had stolen that gray, dim morning of long ago, that so often came back to her in her dreams—on the girl whom she had so pitilessly dragged into darkness worse than death; on the woman whose young life lay blighted by that lie of long ago.

She sat up gasping for breath, stifling in the new depths to which she had been swept, frightened by the new light breaking around

her, shaken with the stir, the shock, of an awakening soul.

If she were to die like this, like this. The *Salve Regina* that was on Marjorie's lips broke into a cry of alarm.

"Oh, Grandmama, what is it? Papa Perot, Tante Lise, quick! Grandmama is ill, is very ill!" They hurried to her side, the old doctor calling to Lord Earnscliffe to bring the carafe of brandy from the buffet; Tante Lise, her withered limbs all a-tremble; Marjorie full of loving concern. "Grandmama! Dear, dear Grandmama!"

"Hush! hush!" the sufferer cried, struggling for speech, for breath. "Don't, don't give me that name, child. I have no—no right to it. Pierre, I must speak. I must tell the truth. Marjorie, here, Marjorie is not my granddaughter—not—not Vera's child."

"Not Vera's child! Oh, my poor Valerie! Her mind is wandering. The shock, the grief is so great," said the old doctor, pityingly.

"Oh, Pierre, no, no. You must listen; you must believe. It was Vera's child that died,

Vera's child that died in the night. *Vera's child*, Pierre. And lest the poor mother should go mad with the grief, the blow, I stole the other. I lied! I lied!"

"No, yo' didn't, Miss Val; no, yo' didn't," broke in Tante Lise shrilly. "'Twas me; 'twas me. Oh, bress de Lawd, I kin b'ar witness at las'; bress de Lawd, old Lise's tongue is loosed, befo' she goes inter de valley ob de shadder. Bress de Lawd God, I kin die, cl'ar and free. Marse Pierre and gemmens all, Miss Marjorie, I'se b'arin' witness, solemn and true, b'arin' witness ez ef I stood befo' de great Jedge's throne. Miss Val, my own dear, white missy, didn't do no harm. 'Twas me, 'twas me. 'Twas old black Lise dat lied and stole. 'Twas ole black Lise dat give Miss Vera de baby Master Carmichael put in my keer and tole her it was her own. 'Twas ole black Lise dat tuk Miss Vera's po' li'l lamb down to de cabin on de beach and laid it on the pretty dead lady's breast."

"Merciful heaven!" burst from Lord Earnscliffe's lips. "What is it she says?"

"The truth." Valerie Marchand sank

down among her cushions guilty, trembling beneath her brother's piercing gaze. "Oh, Pierre, it is the truth—the truth."

"Befo' de Lawd, it's de troof, de troof," shouted Tante Lise. "I'se b'arin' witness. 'Twas me done it all. 'Twas me done de lyin' and de stealin'. 'Twas me dat gib de pretty dead lady's baby to Miss Vera for her own—dat baby dat is Miss Marjorie now."

"Valerie!" the old doctor's voice rang out sharp, stern, clear as a judgment call; "did you do this deadly, this devilish thing? Speak out, in God's name. Who is this girl that you have dragged, held under the' larchand curse? Whose child is Marjorie?"

"Has not Tante Lise told you—told you?" the answer came in the sharp, quavering tone of one who can bear no more.

"It is you who must tell—who must speak," said the old doctor. "Oh, *mon ami*," he laid his trembling hand on Lord Earncliffe's arm, "question this woman, question her. It is your right. For, oh, wicked Valerie, this is the Arthur Eveleth whose wife was washed up on this shore eighteen years

ago. This is the father of the babe that was brought here to your care, the dead mother's babe. Was it that babe that lived—that *lived*, Valerie?"

"It was that babe that lived," she answered dully. "It was Vera's child that died."

"And the curse of the Marchands with her," the old doctor's voice went up in exultant gratitude. "Take your daughter to your heart, *mon ami*. Oh, *ma filleule*, thank God, thank God!" Tears of joy streamed from the old man's eyes as, voiceless in the intensity of his emotion, Arthur Eveleth caught the trembling Marjorie to his breast. His child—his lost Elinor's child, the babe who had not died, who had lived to bless his lonely life, to save his boy, Marjorie—Jack's wife and his child. Ah! he had felt it in the strange, hidden depths of his father's heart all the while—he had known his child from the first.

In the gray dawn of the following morning they brought poor Vera home, wrapped tenderly in the rough coats of her bearers, her shining hair rippling out on the old

sail that served as a stretcher, her lips wearing the childish smile with which she had wandered fearlessly out to a painless death in the waves she loved. The last of the Marchands lay at peace.

And with eyes, cleared by tears of repentance, uplifted to the conquering light, even Valerie Marchand could say—with breaking heart, “It is best—it is best.” While Marjorie, radiant though she was in the new love and joy and happiness that had come to her, wept for the poor little Mama as if she were indeed her own.

* * * * *

Throned on her beautiful mountain heights, blessed as wife, daughter, mother, that brief, shadowed stretch of her young life seems to Marjorie like some troubled morning dream. There was no scandal of revelation. Tante Lise bore the burden of that “mistake” of long ago, as she wished. In her faithful devotion to her young mistress she had given her the “living child,” and on meeting Lord Earnscliffe had confessed the wrong. This was all the world ever heard—or knew.

Madam Marchand did not long survive her idolized child. Old Tante Lise lies at her "missy's" feet in the little churchyard beside the sea, the Cross to which they both turned at last marking their quiet resting-place. The light that did not fail in Marjorie's darkest hour shines in triumph over the fair mountain ridge of Rothesay—from school-house, from chapel, from scores of new and happy homes that have grown up under the new régime that with all its widening scope retains the gracious charm of the old.

Papa Perot is domiciled for the best part of the year with his "*filleule*." Lord Earncliffe, roused into new and active life, now that a sturdy young Arthur Eveleth Mason will keep up the line direct, divides his busy interest between his two homes. Marjorie, after a brief and glittering triumph in the circles to which she was born, finds the green heights of her own mountains the fairest and dearest spot on earth. And Dunvallon, left by Madam Marchand, who was her daughter's heir, to Father Anselm, is a seaside home, where the little waifs and

strays from the crowded slums of the city sport in the mists and the waves all the summer through, undaunted by any shadows of gloom. Good Aunt Betty's hopes are more than realized. The Conquering Light shines from Rothesay. Marjorie has led father, husband, to see and follow its blessed guidance. And even Uncle Dick—but Marjorie had naught to do with Uncle Dick. Through the sweet shadows of Saint Cecile there walks a slight, veiled form with the old wood-flower grace, whose gentle prayers brought the Faith to him.

For Bernice, wise, sweet Bernice, has turned from all the sweetness of earth and sought those ways at which Master Jack wondered so long ago—"the orbits of the stars."

THE END

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